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***The Institutionalisation of Gendered Norms and the
Substantive Representation of Women in
Westminster and the Scottish Parliament***

**Rosa Malley
University of Bristol**

Abstract

Reflecting the turn to institutions amongst feminist scholars, and an understanding of them as gendered (Lovenduski 1998; Krook & Mackay 2011; Franceschet 2011; Kenny 2011), this thesis examines parliamentary culture at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. It takes a novel approach by drawing on literatures within and beyond political science on ceremony, ritual and political space, and by drawing upon an underused method in political science, namely, participant observation. Typically dismissed in studies of Parliament as 'cultural sideshow' (Crewe 2005: 200), this thesis demonstrates that these seemingly banal aspects of parliament speak to Westminster and Holyrood's 'cultural assumptions' in terms of gender and class, and impact upon the belonging of representatives (Duerst-Lahti 2002: 385). Drawing upon participant observation data, collected through 'shadowing' MPs and MSPs, and over 70 qualitative interviews with MPs/MSPs, it finds that Westminster parliamentary culture is perceived, and is experienced, as less inclusionary of its Members than the Scottish Parliament. Cultural assumptions in Westminster's buildings, ceremonies and rituals, contribute to the process through which some members feel included in Parliament, while others are reminded of their marginalised status, primarily in terms of gender and class, but also race and professional background (Puwar 2004). In contrast the Scottish Parliament looks to be experienced as more inclusive by its Members – MSPs are mostly positive about their Parliament, arguing it represents founding commitments to accessibility and equality. Using political space, ceremony and ritualised behaviour as analytical lenses captures the subtle, and difficult to measure, ways in which institutions are 'lived' by their representatives; thought to be necessary for understanding the context in which the substantive representation of women occurs (Mackay 2008: 132). They therefore speak to, and build upon, feminist institutionalist approaches in offering new avenues for studying the ways in which institutions are gendered.

Acknowledgments

Many people deserve thanks for making this PhD such an enjoyable, enriching and fun process. Special thanks go to my supervisors Sarah Childs and Judith Squires who have been unfalteringly supportive, encouraging and incisive in their approach. Sarah in particular has been a first rate mentor, who I have learnt a huge amount from, and I would not have enjoyed it nearly so much without her.

Special thanks also go to Joni Lovenduski for her excellent advice and much appreciated support and to Fiona Mackay, who enabled me to articulate my feminist politics, and without whom I would not have thought to do a PhD.

The research was funded by the Leverhulme Trust and contributes to a wider project 'Gendered Ceremony and Ritual in Parliaments' (GCRP). GCRP is coordinated by Shirin Rai in collaboration with Sarah Childs, Joni Lovenduski and Georgina Waylen. The support offered by the team – intellectual and otherwise – has been indispensable.

I could not have done this thesis without the MPs and MSPs who kindly participated in the research. I would particularly like to thank those MPs and MSPs, who cannot be named, who let me 'shadow' them. They gave up their time and offered invaluable insights throughout, and in so doing, have enriched my understanding of Westminster and the Scottish Parliament and given me a stronger basis on which to challenge cynical and cheap negative stereotypes about our politicians.

I would also like to thank Philip Cowley for giving me valuable feedback and advice, as well as Kristi Winters and Steven McGrigor for useful comments on draft papers. Michael Rush and Paul Cairney very kindly sent me pre-publication drafts of their informative and useful new books.

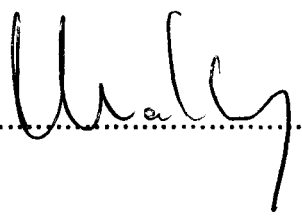
A number of people from both Parliaments have repeatedly given me information and insights. Gavin Thompson in particular has responded to more irksome texts and emails than any one person should. Oonagh Gay, Richard Kelly, John Johnstone and Francesca McGrath have also unfailingly responded to requests for insights/material.

Many other people have offered me feedback, encouragement and, most importantly, friendship throughout. Namely, Faith Armitage – 'my post-doc', Joanna Legg – my flatmate and the only person I debate varieties of neo-institutionalism with, Elizabeth Evans – a tough but fair mock upgrade examiner, and Rachel Minto – who always cheers me up.

Finally, I would like to thank my Mum, Dad, Aunty and my flatmates Becca Davis, Jane Randell and Jo Legg for taking me out for dinner/cooking, and last but not least, my brother Jonny for agreeing to proofread the longest one yet.

Author’s declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED:..... DATE: 16/02/12.....

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Introduction

It is my first shadowing placement at Westminster and I am to meet the MP's researcher at Central Lobby. Arriving at the main visitors' entrance outside the Palace, a stern looking policeman asks me why I am here. Unsure how much information he requires, I start to explain that I am 'shadowing' a Member of Parliament (MP) and have arranged to meet their researcher. He interrupts me upon hearing the name of the MP and points me to security. Photo taken, bags checked and person frisked, I follow instructions towards Westminster Hall. Inside is incredibly large and somewhat gloomy, and I am very aware of the echo of my feet and small wheelie-bag reverberating as I walk through the Hall. I lift my bag to minimise the noise and carry on. Walking along St Stephen's Hall on my way to Central Lobby, I pass large paintings depicting battle scenes. I am asked, once again, at the entrance to Central Lobby what I am here for. I say the MP's name and am directed to a parliamentary official, wearing a ceremonial dark evening suit decorated with a large brass medallion, on the main desk. After explaining who I am meeting, I sit on a green leather bench. My feet do not touch the ground, and looking up to the grandly decorated curved roof, I feel very small, and suddenly nervous about the day ahead.¹

I have just arrived for my first shadowing placement at the Scottish Parliament and am waiting in the large reception area to be met by someone on behalf of the Labour Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) I am shadowing. To my surprise, she comes down to meet me herself rather than sending an assistant. Her friendliness and informality strike me immediately as we exchange initial greetings. This develops as she carefully explains the activities during the time I will be spending

¹ Fieldnotes, Westminster, 04/03/09.

with her. Today is mainly taken up by a committee and we go directly there. Small incidents throughout the day develop my sense of ease and perception of informality in the Scottish Parliament. For instance, the MSP I am shadowing is concerned I will get a cup of tea in the break of the committee I am observing. During the break, two MSPs separately, and spontaneously, chat to me and ask about my research. I am further struck by the contrasting atmosphere from Westminster when watching the casual interaction between MSPs and other staff such as security guards and interns. Later, the MSP I am shadowing casually invites me to join her and a fellow MSP for dinner that evening.²

These vignettes, based on participant observation fieldnotes, record my first impressions arriving at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. They point to some differences between these two political institutions – where I experienced Westminster as daunting and a bit confusing, the informality of the Scottish Parliament was striking from the outset. Based on feminist institutionalist approaches that institutions contain gendered norms, this thesis seeks to explore the inclusiveness of parliamentary culture at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament for women representatives and other under-represented groups. Parliamentary culture, difficult to measure and impossible to quantify, is fundamental to the everyday experiences of those who inhabit the institution, whether as representatives, lobbyists, journalists or PhD researchers. Its inclusiveness, similarly difficult to put a figure on, is explored through participant observation – an innovative method in political science, and over 70 elite interviews with MPs and MSPs. It draws on literatures within and beyond political science on ceremony, ritual and political space to develop a distinctive analytical approach.

Feminist literature and plentiful anecdotal evidence suggest Westminster parliamentary culture can be exclusionary to women. Masculinity is privileged in

² Fieldnotes, Scottish Parliament, 23/03/10.

the House of Commons, where the 'practices and procedures that developed constitute a particular gender regime that is hostile to women and femininity and supportive only of traditional forms of femininity' (Lovenduski 2005: 147). Frequently described as reminiscent of an exclusive gentlemen's club or exclusive public school – to such a great extent it might be considered a cliché, but a revealing cliché nonetheless – the culture and appearance of Westminster is thought to reflect the descriptive under-representation of women. As Baroness Gale so compellingly put it in 2008:

Since 1918, when women were first able to stand as Members of Parliament, only 291 women have been elected, but during the same period 4,363 men were elected. If it was possible to put all the women who have been elected into the House of Commons today, they would still be in the minority.³

The 2010 general election saw only a slight rise in the number of women to 22 per cent or 1 in 5 of MPs.

That upper-class, white men's historical and current dominance of Parliament has resulted in an institution reflecting their preferences is anecdotally supported by the views of a number of women MPs elected in 1997 – the election that saw the most dramatic increase in the number of women. They pointed to the family unfriendly sitting hours, the combative style required for parliamentary performance and overtly sexist behaviour in the chamber – most notoriously the Conservative MP who made 'cupping' gestures at women in the chamber – as evidence of the generally macho environment.⁴ For example, as Barbara Follett, then MP for Stevenage, commented back in 2005:

³ Baroness Gale, House of Lords, 30 October 2008, cited in Kelly, R. and White, I. (2009) 'All Women Shortlists', *House of Commons Library*, SN/PC/05057. I would like to thank Akash Paun for drawing my attention to this reference.

⁴ See for example, Sones et al (2005) *Women in Parliament*, Politico's. Cooke, R. 'Blair's Babes 10 Years On: Oh Babe, just look at us now', *The Observer*, 22nd April 2007, Curtis, P. 'Women and the Coalition: Westminster Culture', *The Guardian*, 20th May 2011.

Everyone who spends any time at Westminster says the same thing. “It is just like a boys’ public school”. And it is, albeit, a 19th century one. First there is the cloakroom with its coat hooks and name tags; then the dining room with its toast and sticky puddings and, finally, there is the chamber, with its shouting, name calling and gentle bullying. But above all, the place is full of boys, or rather, men behaving like boys in the absence of women.⁵

Two high profile episodes in the past year – the infamous ‘calm down dear’ and ‘I understand the honourable lady’s frustration’ lines both delivered by David Cameron during Prime Minister’s Questions – were interpreted by many as evidence of the continued ‘boy’s club’ mentality. This gives reason to believe that, at least as some parliamentary commentators are concerned, Westminster remains a macho environment.⁶

In many ways, the Scottish Parliament looks to be different. Consciously and explicitly framed as a direct rejection of Westminster style politics, a narrative of a ‘new politics’ emerged out of the campaign for the Scottish Parliament. This included an agenda for a culture more consensual, pluralist and inclusive than Westminster (Megaughin and Jeffrey 2009). However, there is general agreement in the academic literature that the ‘new politics’ agenda has failed to transpire and is responsible for expectations so high they could only disappoint. Politics in the Scottish Parliament are no more consensual than Westminster, indeed if anything, partisan politics are more antagonistic between the Scottish parties. The absence of a majority government until the 2011 Scottish elections, resulting in two coalition governments (1999-2003, 2003-07) and a precariously balanced minority government (2007-11), has produced robust party tribalism (Cairney

⁵ Follett, B. ‘A Women’s Place’, A Week in Politics, 19 July 2005, first published in the *Stevenage Herald*, available on her website, http://www.barbara-follett.org.uk/columns_2005/index_2005.html. Accessed 2009.

⁶ See for example, Elliot, C. ‘Cameron’s ‘Calm down, dear’ is a classic sexist put-down’, *The Guardian*, 27 April 2011. Stevenson, A. ‘PMQs: Cameron branded sexist over ‘calm down, dear’’. *politics.co.uk*, 27 April 2011. Gye, H. ‘Nadine Dorries storms out of Commons to schoolboy laughter after Cameron quips that she is ‘frustrated’’, *Mail Online*, 8 September 2011.

2011). Moreover, executive dominance comparable to Westminster is evidence of the failure of more pluralist politics – where power would be shared between Parliament and the people and between Parliament and the executive – to emerge (Winetrobe 2001). On these core criteria, the Scottish Parliament is therefore much more similar to its parent institution it sought to rebel against (Mitchell 2010).

Much less attention has been paid to whether the Scottish Parliament is more inclusive – another of its core founding aspirations (Brown 2000). Indeed, although parliamentary culture is often identified by feminist political scientists as crucial to understanding women's substantive representation, very few studies have looked at it empirically (Lovenduski 2005; Mackay 2008; Franceschet 2011). This thesis seeks to do so using innovative methods and analytical concepts. It is informed by, and builds upon, feminist institutionalist approaches, which call for an explicit synthesis and gendering of neo-institutionalist approaches (Driscoll & Krook 2009; Mackay et al 2009; Waylen 2011; Kenny 2011; Franceschet 2011). In particular, these approaches identify informal aspects of parliamentary culture as crucial for offering both opportunities and constraints for the substantive representation of women (Franceschet 2011). Informal norms of operating are thought to be particularly important for understanding gendered dynamics because 'many of the norms that govern parliaments, such as the preference for an adversarial style or bargaining within 'old boy's networks', are informal' (Franceschet 2011: 62). Moreover, informal norms of operating may sit in tension with the formal structures, rules and commitments (Mackay 2010; Kenny 2011; Chappell 2011) – there may be a disparity between 'rules-in-form' and the 'rules-in-use' (Mackay 2010: 6).

Although feminist institutionalist approaches have produced convincing and sophisticated theoretical insights, they have been less specific about how to examine institutions empirically. This thesis therefore seeks to operationalize a feminist institutionalist approach by bringing together multiple literatures, from within and beyond political science, on political space, ceremony and on ritual

(Lukes 1977; Goffman 1967; Bloch 2005; Parkinson 2009; Goodsell 1988; Edwards 2005). Concepts more commonly used in social anthropology than in political science, these literatures share a concern with, and extend understanding of, institutional power structures (Crewe 2005). They enrich a feminist institutionalist model in three key ways. First, they lend well to hitherto underused methods, such as participant observation, that capture the seemingly banal aspects of institutions. Second, by providing an alternative focus to conventional studies in political science, they draw attention to the symbolic, informal and cultural aspects of institutions which are commonly identified in feminist institutionalist approaches as critical for understanding the gendered environment in which representatives operate. Third, in providing an analytical lens for understanding behaviour within its context, they offer feminist institutionalists additional insight into how political institutions matter for the experiences of representatives.

The case-studies – Westminster and the Scottish Parliament – provide for fruitful comparison. Although Westminster's ceremonies, rituals and buildings are both notable and distinctive, and despite conscious decisions taken in the Scottish Parliament to limit ceremony and to build a modern Parliament, there has been very little attention paid to these aspects of Parliament in political science (Crewe and Muller 2006; Parkinson 2009). Typically dismissed as 'cultural sideshow' (Crewe 2005: 200), these aspects are regarded as irrelevant, and subsidiary, to issues more commonly researched in Parliament such as parliamentary votes, party organisation and reform of Parliament (Cowley and Stuart 2010; Kelso 2009; Russell 2007). However, this thesis contends that these seemingly banal aspects of Parliament are important. The symbols evident in parliamentary ceremonies, rituals and the physical spaces through which they are manifested are not neutral, but reflect and perpetuate dominant institutional power structures by contributing to authoritative ways of seeing and unquestioned norms of behaviour (Lukes 1977: 69). They furthermore endorse some participants as insiders while making it clear to outsiders they are outsiders (Crewe 2005; Puwar 2004).

Accordingly, this thesis examines the importance of political space, ceremony and ritualised behaviour for feelings of belonging amongst MPs and MSPs. These aspects of political institutions speak to its 'cultural assumptions' (Deurst-Lahti 2002: 385). They may privilege some groups above others by differentially affecting feelings of belonging experienced by representatives (March and Olsen 1989), which could in turn impact upon sense of political efficacy (Parkinson 2009: 10). Feelings of belonging, defined simply as 'feeling at home', matter because they are intimately connected with the institutional power grid (Yuval-Davis 2006: 197). They are part of representatives' everyday experiences of the parliamentary environment in which they operate and may impact upon outcomes: as Mackay writes, 'shared values and informal norms are powerful ways in which institutions ... are 'lived' on a day-to-day basis and play an important part in how agendas are sustained over time' (Mackay 2008). Their impact on entitlement and efficacy may impact not only on claims to be 'acting for' women, but also the effectiveness with which the substantive representation of women occurs (Franceschet 2011).

This PhD, then, fills a gap in the literature by examining the inclusiveness of physical, ceremonial and informal aspects of Westminster and the Scottish Parliament, and sheds new light on feelings of belonging amongst their representatives. It develops a distinctive analytical framework – employing concepts from multiple disciplines and, in conducting participant observation, uses a research method not commonly used in political science.

Chapter 1, '*The Gendered and Political Context of Representation*', outlines the theoretical framework – feminist institutionalism – used to understand the substantive representation of women. It develops this framework with concepts from multiple disciplines on political space, ceremony and ritual. Chapter 2, '*Representative Acts and Claims: Understanding Context Through Elite Interviews and Participant Observation*' outlines the rationale for the research, provides

background of the case-studies, and explains the use of elite interviews and participant observation.

Chapters 3-5 analyse the data collected. They seek to demonstrate that a focus on political space, parliamentary ceremony and ritualised behaviour provides greater understanding of the inclusiveness of parliamentary culture at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. A typology of 'traditionalists', 'minimisers' and 'critics' for the Westminster data shows that attitudes amongst MPs towards the parliamentary culture are contested. Parliamentary culture looks to contain masculine (and class) norms that are experienced as exclusionary by many MPs. Greater homogeneity amongst MSPs suggests parliamentary culture is experienced there as more inclusive in terms of gender and class.

Chapter 3, *'First We Shape Our Buildings, Then Our Buildings Shape Us?'*, finds that some MPs – mostly Tory and mostly men – express strong affection for the older buildings on the parliamentary estate, while only Labour and Liberal Democrats are critical of the older buildings they perceive to look like a gentlemen's club. MPs who are indifferent or mixed in their views of parliamentary buildings – so-called minimisers – constitute the largest category of respondents. In contrast, there is much broader approval amongst MSPs of the Scottish Parliament building, and a shared narrative it represents inclusiveness and accessibility, although there is scepticism that the buildings can contribute to a more inclusive culture – a semi-circular chamber has not fostered consensual politics.

'Cultural Sideshow?', Chapter 4, finds similar, but more pronounced, patterns in attitudes towards parliamentary ceremony. Similarly at Westminster, it is mostly Tory men who defend ceremony, however this time a greater number of MPs are critical than are indifferent. Once again, only Labour and Liberal Democrats are critical of parliamentary ceremony, which they associate with social exclusivity. An unexpected finding – that many MPs conflate ceremony with traditions such as the sitting hours – suggests that the extremely long and unpredictable hours

are a crucial factor for the inclusion of women. While attitudes at Westminster are contested, there is unanimous agreement amongst MSPs that the Scottish Parliament does not have Westminster style ceremony, and the vast majority think this 'a good thing'.

The final empirical chapter, '*Ritualised to Conform?*', argues that behaviour in the debating chamber of both Westminster and Holyrood can be understood as ritualised according to the working definition of that which is structured, rule-governed and symbolic. It finds differences amongst those MPs identified as active on women's issues and the matched sample, who are not, in their experiences of ritualised debate. While those MPs who are critical (once again, only Labour and Liberal Democrats) of parliamentary debate, more MPs active on women's issues experience debate as exclusionary on the grounds of gender, while matched MPs are more likely to base their critique on class. In relation to the Scottish Parliament, it finds that behaviour in the chamber is similar to Westminster – both are characterised by partisan party politics on high profile occasions and adversarial exchange. However, in contrast, it does not find that these ritualised forms of behaviour are exclusionary. This suggests that the involvement of, and sense of ownership amongst, women MSPs in the development of ritualised forms of behaviour means these are more inclusive in terms of gender and class.

Chapter 6, *Discussion/Conclusion*, draws together the empirical findings in order to argue that the Scottish Parliament is more inclusive than Westminster in terms of gender and class. It critically assesses the usefulness of political space, ceremony and ritual as analytical approaches for feminist institutionalist approaches. It argues that the approach taken in this thesis provides greater understanding of the inclusiveness of Westminster and Holyrood's parliamentary culture, but that it is limited in providing evidence that this impacts upon how the substantive representation of women occurs in and through political institutions. It reflects on whether this is a weakness of the particular approach used here, whether it demonstrates a challenge for feminist institutionalists more broadly or

whether parliamentary culture is not the right place to be looking when trying to understand how the substantive representation of women occurs.

Chapter 1: The Gendered and Political Context of Representation

There has been a turn in gender and politics scholarship (and in political science more generally) towards institutions that, whilst present in much empirical and conceptual work, has in recent years become much more explicit (Lovenduski 1998; Mackay 2004). More sophisticated understandings of gender, as a process rather than a dichotomous variable, have enabled feminists to explore how institutional power structures are gendered (Lovenduski 1998). Feminist scholars have argued that gender is a central dynamic shaping institutional power structures – the process of gendering constitutes and occurs within institutions (Acker 1992); there is a ‘gendered logic of appropriateness’ that encourages certain types of behaviour according to institutionally specific conceptions of femininity and masculinity (Chappell 2006). Accordingly, a gendered lens reveals the gendered dynamics of institutional creation, reform, resistance or inertia (Mackay 2008).

The turn towards institutions – and an understanding of them as gendered – is reflected in both empirical and conceptual approaches to women’s political representation. Empirical studies investigating the impact of women’s presence on parliamentary processes and outcomes have demonstrated the precarious relationship between descriptive and substantive representation of women – an increase in the number of women does not translate readily nor necessarily to the transformation of policy outcomes (Childs 2004; Childs and Krook 2006; Dodson 2006; Mackay 2006). Indeed such research points to the need to contextualise behaviour; representatives’ behaviour cannot be understood separately from the environment in which they operate (Lovenduski 2005) as both sex and gender are mediated by party and institutional constraints (Childs 2004). More recent conceptual literature on the substantive representation of women emphasises the need to develop more holistic and fluid conceptions of representation (Celis et al 2008; Mackay 2008; Squires 2008). Central to these

trends is a call for new methods that enable a 'thick description' of representation that captures 'the daily enactment of institutions' and the 'doing' of gender (Mackay 2008: 126).

Representation

The question of how the political representation of women occurs in political processes – descriptively, symbolically or substantively (Pitkin 1972) – is at the core of much gender and politics research. While the facets of representation are inevitably interrelated, this PhD focuses on the substantive representation of women rather than the descriptive or the symbolic. In electoral politics, women's descriptive representation refers to the numbers of women political representatives. This is generally easy to establish and is the starting point for exploring barriers to women's parity of representation in politics (Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Symbolic representation is concerned with perceptions of Parliament and parliamentarians (Pitkin 1972: 106). There are three broad empirical approaches (Childs & Lovenduski 2011). First, it is examined through gendered representations of politicians in the British media (Childs 2008), second, the significance of role models (Childs 2004), and third, the gendered nature of political symbols (Meier & Lombardo 2010 cited in Childs & Lovenduski 2011). However, it remains the most under-studied dimension of representation in the extant gender and politics literature (Evans 2009).

Substantive representation refers to the notion that, because of women's distinct social positioning, their presence in politics is likely to bring different interests and perspectives to the political agenda (Phillips 1995; Young 2000). Although not guaranteed, women's descriptive representation is considered essential, first, for 'politics of transformation' – the inclusion of previously excluded groups permits challenge to mainstream ideas of what issues constitute the political (Phillips 1995: 45). Issues that disproportionately affect women, for instance in the UK at least, childcare, domestic violence and forced marriage are then more likely to be included in the political process. Second, for an alternative 'gendered perspective' to the male norm, essential for seemingly gender-neutral issues that are in reality

gendered in their effects. An example is the differing implications of public transport for people commuting to work compared to parents travelling with small children. The presence of women is, moreover, especially important in situations where interests have not yet been articulated, and the inclusion of affected individuals is necessary for insights that may not be noticed by someone without such experiences and corresponding perspectives (Mansbridge 1999: 648).

There are two main areas of critique of the politics of presence literature, only one of which is relevant to this study. The first challenges the unguaranteed guarantee that women will 'make a difference' by arguing that, for a normative feminist argument for women's representation, not 'just any representative' will do (Dovi 2002). Suzanne Dovi argues that some representatives are 'preferable' to others and proposes criteria as a way to evaluate, 'preferable descriptive representatives will have strong *mutual* relationships with *dispossessed groups*' (Dovi 2002: 735). She challenges the idea that criteria for representatives are essentialist by arguing that, conversely, diversity within groups makes such criteria necessary. Although Dovi does not deal adequately with issues of accountability, and does not take seriously the claims of conservative representatives who may substantively 'act for' women but may not fulfil Dovi's criteria (Celis & Childs 2011), her overtly political argument for feminist representatives is convincing. Moreover, the nuance of her argument lies in its flexibility – she seeks only to pose criteria for evaluating preferable representatives, not impose it in all circumstances.

More pertinent for this analysis of parliamentary culture is Laurel Weldon's (2002) critique that parliaments and legislatures are not the right place to look for the substantive representation of women. She argues that privileging formal parliamentary arenas at the expense of others ignores how representation occurs in other sites (Weldon 2002). Employing Young's concept of group perspective, Weldon argues that individual legislators cannot articulate this alone. Rather, a group perspective is formulated through the interaction of multiple perspectives

from marginalised groups. For this reason, she calls for attention away from the legislature to women's policy machinery and women's movement (Weldon 2002: 1153-6). While an important critique, she does not 'answer' the question of how women's substantive representation occurs, but moves the debate to another set of actors and sites. Furthermore, her argument underestimates the importance of representatives, and the gendered context in which they operate, for enabling the substantive representation of women (Mackay 2008: 128-9).

Feminist Empirical Approaches to the Substantive Representation of Women

Empirical studies on the substantive representation of women have been typified by an approach that looks at its relationship with women's descriptive representation (Childs 2004; Dodson 2006; Mackay 2006). Following Anne Phillips' (1995) seminal piece, *The Politics of Presence*, and despite her warning that it is a 'shot in the dark', feminist political scientists have been eager to explore the intuitive assumption that an increase in the numbers of women in political institutions leads to the greater substantive representation of their interests. This has been explored using a variety of research methods (Krook & Squires 2006); contributing to better understanding of the representation of women's issues and demonstrating evidence of a precarious relationship between descriptive and substantive representation (Mackay 2008). First, scholars have drawn on survey data to provide robust evidence of attitudinal differences amongst male and female politicians to women's issues (Lovenduski and Norris 2003). Second, elite interviews with women politicians have provided insight into the (self-reported) experiences of female representatives and demonstrated a perception amongst many that they feel a responsibility, and claim to, 'act for' women (Childs 2004; Mackay 2001). Third, gender and politics scholars have explored the substantive representation of women through various types of legislative analysis. In the case of Westminster, by identifying the key players instrumental to legislation through process tracing, by looking at the relationship of MPs' sex to Early Day Motions and parliamentary questions, and by examining rebellion against the party whip (Childs and Withey 2006; Cowley and Childs 2003; Childs and Withey 2004; Bird 2005; Annesley 2010).

However, limitations in the literature on the substantive representation of women have resulted in calls for new approaches (Celis et al 2008). Empirical studies have tended to focus on the behaviour of women politicians (Childs 2004; Mackay 2006). This trend reflects an inevitable interest in the activities of groups previously under-represented from political institutions and a temptation to explore whether women's presence 'makes a difference'. Nonetheless, looking for differences between men and women representatives can fail to make visible the partisan and gendered context in which all representatives operate (Dodson 2006). It also risks essentialising women, creating unrealistic expectations as to what they can achieve as elected representatives, and ignores the possibility that men can also be effective advocates of gender equality (Childs and Krook 2006; Celis et al 2008). The interchanging of the terms 'sex' and 'gender' in empirical studies reflects the difficulties of operationalising more sophisticated concepts of gender as relational, performed and as a characteristic of institutions and norms (Kenny 2007).

Moreover, despite acknowledgment of the importance of contextualising behaviour, many studies continue to take a micro approach by looking at the activities of individual legislators engaged in parliamentary activity in which legislators have relative autonomy to pursue their own interests (Childs and Withey 2006; Bird 2005). So, despite capturing compelling evidence of a relationship between descriptive and substantive representation in these cases, these studies do not capture, or do so in a limited way, political context and largely fail to address areas of parliamentary activity where significant shifts in policy are able to occur. Finally, few studies, with some exceptions (Puwar 2004; Crewe 2005; Lovenduski 2005), have fully dealt with the more mundane aspects of institutions that speak to their 'cultural assumptions' (Duerst-Lahti 2002). These are critical to shaping people's 'everyday' experiences and are therefore likely to be important for understanding how representation of women occurs (Mackay 2008).

There have, then, been calls for a number of shifts in approach. Scholars have urged a shift away from questions of 'do women represent women?' and 'do women make a difference?' to *who, where, what and how* substantive representation of women occurs (Celis et al 2008). This shift is a move towards a more holistic and fluid conception of representation that does not presume in advance the actors involved, opens the forum for representation beyond the legislature, does not limit what may be considered 'women's interest' and looks beyond policy outcome in identifying attempts to represent women (Celis et al 2008: 99-100). Central to these trends is a call for 'thick description' of gendered institutional contexts: able to get at their internal dynamics, their daily enactment, and the performance of gender, in order to assess, 'the impact of these processes on continuity and change, innovation and resistance' (Mackay 2008: 132). These trends suggest that new methods are needed to capture the gendered dynamics of institutions.

Theoretical Framework: Feminist Institutionalism

Taking a lead from the renewed focus on political institutions amongst feminist scholars, and benefiting from these more recent conceptual insights, this research employs a historical feminist institutionalist framework (Mackay 2011; Waylen 2011; Franceschet 2011; Chappell 2011). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, feminist research in political science tended to concentrate on broadening the concept of the political; however since the 1990s, and reflecting women's increased participation in formal politics, a substantial feminist scholarship has shifted its gaze to political institutions (Krook and Squires 2006). Using more sophisticated conceptions of gender as a characteristic, not only of people, but also of institutions, these scholars have argued that institutional power structures, norms and behaviours contain gendered norms (Lovenduski 1998). Historically dominated by men, many political institutions contain ostensibly gender-neutral norms that generally privilege men and masculinity (Cockburn 1991; Duerst-Lahti & Kelly 1995; Lovenduski 1998; Walby 1990). People who tend to fit in best and reach influential positions are those who perform masculinity well. Conceptions of leadership are gendered masculine; as a result of their sex, men have

automatic 'social power' in political institutions (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly 1996: 26). Women, on the other hand, have to prove this and paradoxically are often criticised when they do so (Puwar 2004: 97-9).

The turn to institutions has been noted by scholars who call for a more deliberate and systematic synthesis between mainstream neo-institutionalist and feminist approaches. The Feminism and Institutionalism International Network (FIIN), an ongoing theory-building project, is a recently formed group of feminist scholars who have drawn on neo-institutionalist approaches in order to develop a distinctively feminist institutionalism (see <http://www.femfiin.com/>). They build on the work of feminist political scientists who have long identified the political institution as a mediating factor in the complex relationship between the descriptive and substantive representation (Lovenduski 1998; Acker 1992; Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995), but call for more explicit adoption of mainstream neo-institutionalist approaches (Mackay 2011; Waylen 2011; Chappell 2011). In particular, the project calls for attention to the formal, informal and normative aspects of institutions and the ways in which these are gendered (Franceschet 2011). They argue that a synthesis between mainstream and feminist approaches has the potential to provide a systematic and rigorous framework for feminist analyses of the institution (Kenny 2011). In turn, the application of a gendered lens to institutional power structures, behaviour and norms, promises to enrich mainstream approaches. Indeed, considering gender is simply 'good social science' (Lovenduski 2011).

Mainstream neo-institutionalist approaches, which developed as a response to behavioural approaches dominant in political science during the 1960s and 1970s, are characterised by a concern with the role of institutions in affecting social and political outcomes (Hall and Taylor 1996: 936). Neo-institutionalists critique the tendency in behavioural approaches to view institutions as neutral arenas for competing actors, calling for a view of the institution as an autonomous force in politics (March and Olsen 1989: 16). These approaches mark a shift from focus on individual action, recalling attention to the importance of contextualising

behaviour in the environment in which it occurs (Rhodes 1995: 53-4). Neo-institutionalism has both sustained the esteemed tradition of institutional analysis and enhanced understanding of the role of institutions in political life (Thelen 1999: 369).

Feminist institutionalists have rightly pointed to the fragmentation within neo-institutionalist approaches (Driscoll and Krook 2009; Mackay et al 2009). Hall and Taylor (1996) attribute the considerable confusion over definitions to the multiple strands that developed independently, albeit under the same label, and identify three schools of thought: historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. These approaches differ critically in their understanding of how institutions influence behaviour and how change occurs. While each offer pertinent insights, the shared foundations of historical institutionalist approaches with feminist political science means it offers more potential than other institutionalist varieties for a synthesis with feminist approaches to gendered institutions – both are methodologically pluralist, problem driven and historically focused (Waylen 2009: 246). Although neo-institutionalist approaches fail to acknowledge gender as an important dynamic in institutional power structures (Kenny and Mackay 2009: 274), historical institutionalism is nonetheless the most helpful approach for this research because of its emphasis on the history of the institution in explaining the development and character of its culture. It is moreover useful for this research because of its broad definition of institutions that includes informal norms; insights on the disparities of power amongst social groups and the way in which institutional norms privilege some groups above others; and a nuanced account of institutional creation and change (March and Olsen 1989; Thelen 1999).⁷

⁷ The strengths of rational choice and sociological approaches vis-à-vis historical institutionalism – in the first instance, on the way in which institutions constitute the ‘rules of the game’ through which participants conduct their strategic interactions, and in the second, insights on the way in which institutions shape behaviour subconsciously through habit, tradition and ‘shared scripts’ – are outweighed by the failure of both to sufficiently address institutional power structures (Hall and Taylor 1995; Mackay et al 2009; Driscoll and Krook 2009).

Historical approaches grew, in the 1960s and 1970s, out of two schools of thought that emphasised how institutions contain asymmetric power structures and a view of, 'polity as an overall system of interacting parts' (Hall and Taylor 1996: 937). Defining institutions broadly as, 'formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or the political economy', they are characterised by the multifaceted way in which they conceptualise the relationship between institutions and behaviour; the attention they pay to asymmetric power structures; their view of institutional change as path-dependent and unpredictable; and openness to ideological power in shaping political outcomes (Hall and Taylor 1996: 938). By incorporating a view of behaviour as influenced by both strategic calculations and by culture, they combine the best elements of rational choice and sociological approaches (Hall and Taylor 1996: 939).

According to historical approaches, behaviour is explained both by formal procedures, and critically for understanding gender dynamics, informal norms (March and Olsen 1989). Formal rules and procedures regulate behaviour through processes of sanctions and rewards – individuals who deviate from the rules will be punished and so adherence is encouraged (Scott 1995: 35-7). However, institutional rules defined narrowly are insufficient to explain all behaviour in that they are not always relevant, adhered to and do not cover all situations. Furthermore, feminist approaches identify the importance of informal norms for an understanding of gender inequality in political institutions. Whilst not necessarily overt in formal procedures, informal norms often play a crucial role in reproducing gendered dynamics that disadvantage women (Franceschet 2009: 5). A broader definition of rules as, 'the routines, procedures, conventions, roles, strategies, organizational forms, and technologies around which political activity is constructed' (March and Olsen 1989: 22) is therefore more insightful for explaining behaviour that is done unquestioningly (Scott 1995: 40-5). For historical institutionalists, actors adhere to the rules because of social obligation as much as to deference to formal rules. These factors (more or less depending on the context) define relationships between participants by determining what is

suitable behaviour and communication, 'what is appropriate for a particular person in a particular situation is defined by political and social institutions and transmitted through socialization' (March & Olsen 1989: 23).

This emphasis on the normative aspect of institutions, and an understanding of power structures that privilege some social groups above others, means historical institutionalism provides a stronger base, vis-à-vis other strands of neo-institutionalism, for feminist approaches to gendered institutions (Waylen 2009: 248). For historical theorists, there is a tendency for dominant groups to define the rules and for others to adapt. This gives social groups differential access to the institutional decision-making processes (Hall and Taylor 1996: 941). Politics is characterised by conflict over goals and certain interests prevail over others. Institutions are not neutral arbitrators, they, 'reflect, and also reproduce and magnify, particular patterns of power distribution in politics' (Thelen 1999: 394). Power is central to the development of institutions and groups benefiting from existing power structures act to reinforce them (March and Olsen 1989: 47). Historical approaches provide, then, understanding of everyday behaviour and less structured decision-making processes in showing how members of organisations more often act according to appropriate norms of behaviour rather than self-interest or conscious preference. Moreover, they enable understanding of how institutional rules and norms contribute to the actor's worldview – affecting preferences and identities by shaping their conception of what possible courses of action are available (Hall & Taylor 1996: 938-40).

Historical approaches are, furthermore, useful for this research because of nuanced insights on patterns of institutional creation and development (Waylen 2009). Offering a 'path dependent' account of change, the most insightful historical approaches emphasise the contested and unpredictable nature of its development (Kenny 2007). Critical junctures – atypical opportunities for change – such as the creation of a new Parliament, are highly illustrative examples of changing norms, however most change is likely to be less explicit and more incremental (Chappell 2006: 230). This account of change enables a view of

institutional development as haphazard and unpredictable. It acknowledges the contested nature of institutional change and allows us to view institutions as the outcome of competing groups with diverse and conflicting aims (Kenny 2007: 93). Such a dynamic view of institutions provides tools for understanding how gender norms can be reconceptualised (Kenny and Mackay 2009: 276). If, according to feminist approaches to institutions, institutional norms and culture are gendered in the first place, they can also be regendered (Beckwith 2005; Chappell 2006; Driscoll & Krook 2009; Kenny 2007; Kenny & Mackay 2009; Lovenduski 2005; Mackay et al 2009; Puwar 2004; Waylen 2009).

Feminist Approaches to Institutions

Using more complex conceptions of gender, feminist political science has shown that the interaction of official procedures, informal norms and symbols in political institutions contain gendered norms of behaviour (Chappell 2006: 224). Separating sex and gender, and recognising their intersection with class, race, sexuality and history, allows new ways of dealing with differences between women. It has also enabled feminist scholars to demonstrate how institutions are gendered: institutions contain distinct conceptions of masculinities and femininities and are characterised by these to varying degrees (Lovenduski 1998: 338). Much feminist political science research to date therefore contains neo-institutionalist insights, both implicitly and overtly, and promises to enrich mainstream accounts by offering a renewed focus on power and through their exposure of masculine assumptions in seemingly impartial norms (Kenny and Mackay 2009: 278).

Within institutions there is a 'gender regime' which reflects wider social structures – the gender order, a 'historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity' (Connell 1987: 99). This gender regime stipulates appropriate gender roles and encourages men and women to act in particular ways, for instance women as homemakers and men as breadwinners (Connell 1987: 107-120). Joni Lovenduski (1998) identifies four types of knowledge needed to understand the gender

regime in political institutions. First, everyone in the institution has a sex and performs gender (Lovenduski 1998: 348). Idealised notions of masculinity and femininity are created and recreated through institutional practices – individuals construct gender as appropriate for/to the institution (Acker 1992: 568). Roles within the workplace contain gender norms and individuals have to negotiate these in order to successfully combine the performance of their professional and gender role. For example, the nature and perceptions of a teacher's authority will vary depending on whether they are male or female. Women's entry to political institutions requires adjustment of the traditional gender contract – this helps to explain resistance to measures seen to threaten it, for instance gender equality policies (Cockburn 1991: 142).

Second, the experience of an individual in the institution varies by sex and by gender (Lovenduski 1998: 348). The patriarchal structures of political institutions, 'are more often in men's interests than women's' (Walby 1990: 160). Men and women have contrasted experiences of formal and informal gendered institutional processes (Cockburn 1991: 48). Gender neutrality does not exist – men and women can behave in the same way but their behaviour is often interpreted differently, for instance assertiveness might be welcomed as firm in a man, but derided as aggressive in a woman (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly 1995: 28). This point is evident from the highly gendered treatment of politicians in the British media (Childs 2008). Furthermore, men and women have to deal with masculinity and femininity in different ways – femininity must be managed and there is a 'burden of doubt' upon female bodies to prove they are capable (Puwar 2004: 91-7). Whereas the 'traditional politician' assumes and is assumed to possess authority, the construction of entitlement is necessary for non-traditional figures (Liddle & Michielsens 2000: 128-9). The presumed norm therefore finds it easier to fit into political institutions than people who deviate from the norm.

Third, sex and gender interact with other components of identity (Lovenduski 1998: 348). Identities are contextual, fluid and multiple – gender and sex intersect with class, race, sexuality, and history, in different ways depending on

the context (Porter 1998: 52-5). However, while the gender regime is not always the most important structuring process in the institution, for instance, other factors such as partisan politics or class may be at the forefront of some people's identity in political institutions; gender intersects with these and is therefore always present (Connell 1987: 120).

Fourth, institutions have gendered cultures and are involved in, 'processes of producing and reproducing gender' (Lovenduski 1998: 348). Organisational control depends on dominance over ideology and institutions that are controlled by a relative high concentration of men or masculinity are likely to give these groups greater control (Connell 1987: 107-120). In arguing there is an intimate relationship between gender and power, Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly (1995) show that conceptions of leadership contain masculine norms that privilege men. This is evident from, and manifests itself in, the organisation's 'gender ethos', which might be progressive or traditional (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly 1995: 29). Moreover, the process of gendering occurs within institutions – institutions and individual action are 'mutually constitutive' (Mackay et al 2009: 32). Expressions of femininity and masculinity constitute the institution and are reproduced by it (Acker 1992: 567). Dominant conceptions of gender are reinforced through the creation of roles, skills and responsibilities where sex determines what people are expected to be good at and what they are trained in (Connell 1987: 102).

Ceremony, Ritual and Parliamentary Buildings

Feminist institutionalist scholars have, then, produced a sophisticated and convincing analytical framework demonstrating how gender pervades institutional power structures. However, they have been less specific on how to use these concepts in practice, for instance how to capture empirically the informal aspects of institutions (Waylen 2009; Mackay et al 2009; Chappell 2002). Reflecting this observation, this analysis proposes to develop a distinctive feminist institutionalist framework by incorporating strands of literature from multiple disciplines – first, on ceremony and ritual (though it draws a distinction

between these) and second, on political space. Bringing together four sets of independent literature is not a straightforward task. However, the shared interests between gender and politics research, historical institutionalism and the literatures on ceremony and ritual as well as that on political space, means that interchange promises to enrich a feminist institutionalist theoretical framework. All share a concern with institutional power structures and how these are maintained over time. Moreover, insights from this literature speak to feminist institutionalist concern with the informal and cultural aspects of political institutions (Mackay 2008; Franceschet 2011). They therefore offer feminist institutionalists interested in the gendered nature of institutional norms a lens to understand ways in which aspects of the parliamentary culture may impact upon feelings of belonging experienced by representatives in Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. This may, in turn, permit observations on how institutional context impacts upon the substantive representation of women.

Ceremony and Ritual

The concepts of ceremony and ritual originated in social anthropology, however their usage has spread to a broad spectrum of disciplines including religious studies (Zuesse 1987; Bell 1992), sociology (Goffman 1967), history (Mann 2006) and psychotherapy (Imber-Black, Roberts & Whiting 1988). Despite their widespread popularity, political science has traditionally dismissed ceremony and ritual as a 'cultural sideshow' (Crewe 2005: 200); literature on parliaments devotes little attention to what might be commonly understood as political ceremony and ritual because of its assumed insignificance in 'real' power (Crewe and Muller 2006: 8-11). Yet a recent anthropological study of the House of Lords convincingly contends that a better understanding of our political institutions is gained by considering, 'rituals, rules, symbols and hierarchies' that are, 'an integral part of the political process' (Crewe 2005: 6). Looking at the intensity of debates amongst peers, Emma Crewe demonstrates how ceremony and ritual are bound up in changing contexts of, 'socialisation, status hierarchies and political parties' (Crewe 2010: 322). In innovatively engaging with fundamental processes

of power, these concepts appear to offer a way to operationalize feminist institutionalist insights on gender and power.

The eclectic use of ceremony and ritual, both as subjects and concepts, across diverse disciplines has resulted in inconsistent and contested definitions. The terms are used most extensively within social anthropology, the springboard from which other disciplines take and modify conceptions. However, their usage here is interchangeable and often imprecise. Some make distinctions between them (Gluckman 1962; Crewe 2005), while others oppose the possibility or desirability of doing so (Moore and Myerhoff 1977; Lane 1981). Many conceptions of ritual limit it to an official, orchestrated and planned occasion (Turner 1969; Moore and Myerhoff 1977; Abeles 1988; Lane 1981), whilst other definitions extend the activities that can be regarded as ritual (Goffman 1967; Lukes 1977; Crewe 2005; Bell 2005; Bloch 2005). Similarly, a conception of ceremony as a stylised performance, demarcated from everyday proceedings (Moore and Myerhoff 1977), is contrasted to the inclusion of a wider range of activities (Gluckman 1962).

Studies of ceremony and ritual in politics to date are dominated by special occasion cases, for example, an examination of maiden speeches in the New Zealand Parliament (Olsson and Tremaine 2002) and comparison of oath-taking across several legislatures (Muller 2006). An exception is Crewe's ethnographic study in the House of Lords (2005), which examines ritualised debates in addition to more obvious examples of political ceremony such as State Opening of Parliament and maiden speeches. This research uses 'ceremony and ritual' to explore both formal, and more obviously, ceremonial events as well as more informal behaviour. Examining daily behaviour, that which is not officially sanctioned, but is conventional and based on routine, is essential because it provides a glimpse of the more subtle and nuanced (and therefore potentially more powerful) forces that create institutional norms. The extent to which the terms are used interchangeably by authors and the frequency with which they

are used to refer to a formally orchestrated event makes a distinction between them on this basis worthwhile.

Accordingly, ceremony should be considered to be a type of ritual that interrupts normal proceedings (Crewe 2005: 231). Ceremony can be understood to refer to *a formal and officially sanctioned event, consciously and deliberately performed on a special occasion* (Moore and Myerhoff 1977; Crewe 2005). Conceptions of ritual that do not entail a necessary religious element and that extend its activities to include everyday behaviour (Goffman 1967; Lukes 1977; Crewe 2005; Bloch 2005; Bell 2005) are more useful for this study of representation and representatives' behaviour in Parliament. The most useful definition of political ritual is provided by Steven Lukes (1977), who having reviewed the literature and finding none satisfactory, proposes his own. According to Lukes, political ritual is a, *'rule-governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance'* (Lukes 1977: 54). This definition of ritual covers activities that are performed on an everyday basis, unthinkingly, based on norms and assumptions. Participants may not be aware they are participating in a ritual and regard their behaviour as common sense. Nonetheless, behaviour that is not necessarily acknowledged as such by participants may be considered ritualised if it is rule-governed, structured and symbolic (Gluckman 1962; Lukes 1977; Crewe 2005).

Political Space

Similarly to ceremony and ritual, there has been relatively little attention paid to physical space/s in political science. The term 'political space' tends to be used metaphorically to refer to virtual realms of political involvement rather than its physical arenas (Parkinson 2006: 1-8). Exceptions to this show the importance of parliamentary buildings as a political symbol and for inclusiveness (Goodsell 1988; Duerst-Lahti 2002; Edwards 2004; Parkinson 2009). Parliamentary buildings, the most prominent symbol and artefact of political culture, are 'self-consciously built stages for the performance of political rituals' (Goodsell 1988: 287). As physical embodiments of institutional norms, insights from literature on political space

build on those on ceremony and ritual. Often intentionally designed as a landmark building, they are indicative of the story Parliament is telling about itself (Edwards 2004: 43). Moreover, symbols contained within political spaces are thought to send messages to participants and observers about 'who belongs' to the political system (Parkinson 2009). This may, in relation to this study, affect the sense of entitlement amongst women politicians, influencing how they manage their gender identity and whether and how they seek to represent women.

Once again, multiple literatures are drawn upon to explore the relationship between parliamentary culture, inclusion and political space. The limited but insightful discussions of physical space in the political science literature indicate that buildings matter as a political symbol and for revealing institutional norms and values (Goodsell 1988; Edwards 2004; Parkinson 2006, 2009). Official documents and empirical research relating to parliamentary buildings, along with historical literature on Parliament, provide illustrative examples of these claims (Port 2002, Kelsey 2002, Hawkyard 2002, Kyle 2002, Wilkinson 2002). Moreover, insights from anthropology (Ardener 2000), geography (Imrie and Hall 2001) and architecture (Weisman 1992; Rendell 2000) provide further understanding of the way in which (gendered) institutional power structures and norms are reflected and entrenched through the physical space. Insights taken from across these literatures indicate that political space may matter for the inclusion of women in two key ways: for providing insight into parliamentary culture and for conditioning behaviour.

Gendered institutional assumptions and norms can be inferred from political space. Symbols contained within parliamentary buildings, both those inadvertently and intentionally present, are indicative of the, often mixed, values held by the key players in the founding, design and maintenance of the institution (Goodsell 1988; Edwards 2004). The design and style of parliamentary buildings and spaces within them speak to the cultural preferences of the groups in control of their creation and maintenance (Duerst-Lahti 2002). They therefore draw

attention to institutional power structures and are indicative of who and what constitutes the political norm. Put simply, and using feminist institutionalist reasoning, a parliamentary building dominated by masculine symbols and narratives suggests that the ostensibly gender-neutral public figure is in fact male (Acker 1992: 668). In contrast, a parliamentary building characterised by a plurality of symbols and narratives may be indicative of a more inclusive political system.

Physical embodiments of institutional norms may therefore have implications for the inclusiveness of the parliamentary culture – representatives whose identities are given ‘physical anchor points’ in the parliamentary building are more likely to feel more included in political processes (Parkinson 2009: 10). The relationship between political space and social relations played out within them is discussed by authors across all disciplines – creation and use of the physical space can reveal both institutional norms and the power structures that determine them (Goodsell 1988; Weisman 1992; Ardener 2000; Rendell 2000; Imrie and Hall 2001; Edwards 2004). The cultural preferences revealed in political symbols can tell us ‘who belongs’ to the political system and suggest that some groups ‘belong’ more than others. Goodsell argues that, ‘those who conceive, plan, design and furnish public buildings both follow the specific orders of regime officials and respond unconsciously to their surrounding cultural milieu. These two relationships of architecture to the political world are often indistinguishable from one another. Both contribute to the preservation, articulation and formation of political culture’ (Goodsell 1988: 289). Weisman makes the power dynamics more explicit in her argument that architecture is, ‘a record of deeds done by those who had the power to build. It is shaped by social, political and economic forces and values embodied in the forms themselves, the processes through which they are built, and the manner in which they are used’ (Weisman 1992: 2).

If political space is indicative of parliamentary culture, it can be presumed that it is also indicative of the preferred culture of the groups involved in its creation and maintenance. In this way, the physical space not only sheds light on

institutional norms, but is also revealing of institutional power structures (Goffman 1979; Ardener 2000; Rendell 2000). Control over access to and activities within different areas of political space are revealing of the prevailing social hierarchy – rights to the physical space are accorded and administered by status and rank (Ardener 2000: 114-5). This is well illustrated by historical literature on women's entitlement to the Palace of Westminster throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. For instance, prohibited from the viewing gallery in the 1700s, women were subject to an uncomfortable view of the chamber through 'ventilator-cum-peepholes' from a dusty attic above (Wilkinson 2002: 150). Women's increasing but restricted access to the Palace in the 1800s was limited to areas such as the Terrace and Dining Rooms where they paraded for the entertainment of the men in between serious business (Port 2002: 192).

Some of these observations look, however, to be an oversimplification of the power dynamics involved in creation and control over the physical space. For instance, Weisman tends to a functionalist account in presuming that a singular group holds control, whereas in reality a multiplicity of actors, relations, events and interests compete in complex and ongoing institutional power struggles (Mackay et al 2009: 260). However, the explicit attention drawn to historical and market factors involved in the construction and use of the built environment is a strength of such accounts (Imrie and Hall 2001: 7). Symbols and messages contained in parliamentary buildings are therefore a good indicator of some of the accepted norms and ideals of an institution. Moreover, the emphasis on power draws attention to the importance of decision-making processes behind the building – more inclusive processes are likely to result in more inclusive spaces (Edwards 2004). Such an assertion is supported by the construction of the Welsh Assembly, where a conscious effort was made to create a more inclusive political culture by mainstreaming access for disabled groups (Edwards 2004: 43-5).

The second way in which the literature on political space is relevant to feminist institutionalism, and this research, is its insights on the conditioning effects upon

behaviour. These insights have the potential to develop the analysis, beyond the inclusiveness of parliamentary culture, to the next step of how the substantive representation of women occurs. According to Weisman, the built environment not only reflects but also shapes ideas about social relations (Weisman 1992: 2). The cultural values of the institution affect representatives' everyday experiences of the institution and may shape their behaviour according to prevailing standards of the political norm. Subconscious and strategic decisions about behaviour are likely to be affected by the political culture which is repeatedly reinforced by the physical environment in which representatives operate (Parkinson 2009: 5). This may have implications for how they go about their representative function, affecting for instance, how women politicians manage their gender identity during parliamentary debate.

As previously discussed, feminist institutionalist approaches argue that institutional practices are involved in the constructions of masculinities and femininities (Acker 1992; Lovenduski 1998) and political space may be amongst the mediating factors in this. Cultural codes contained in the physical space may act as 'cues' by transmitting messages about institutionally appropriate modes of behaviour. Symbols have the potential to deter or encourage behaviour by regularising participants to institutional norms and ways of behaving (Goodsell 1988: 297). There are many examples to support this argument. Continuity in Westminster's procedures over centuries is attributed in part to unchanged seating arrangements in the chamber (Hawkyard 2002: 66-8). Indeed, it is a common observation that the oppositional layout of the benches in the chamber of the House of Commons invites adversarial behaviour (Goodsell 1988: 298); while the gothic architecture of Westminster Palace is described by a former MP as oppressive to potential radicals (Sedgemore 1995: 43). This argument is further supported by the importance attached by the founders of the Scottish Parliament who hoped the pervasive symbols of public participation throughout the building would foster new inclusive politics (Scottish Parliament: Building User Brief, 1998).

At an intuitive level, this argument makes sense; we continuously adjust our behaviour to fit with our environments, illustrated for instance, by the practice of speaking more quietly in a library or a church. It might therefore be expected that people operating in and visiting political buildings will to some extent adjust their conduct to make it suitable for the environment, according to both formal rules and in keeping with the prevailing atmosphere. However, a caveat, that it is important not to overstate the importance of the built environment in influencing behaviour, is stated in much of the literature. For instance, Goodsell qualifies his argument by emphasising that the effects of political buildings upon behaviour are neither deterministic nor predictable (Goodsell 1988: 297) and while convincing examples can be provided to support an argument of the mutually constitutive relationship between buildings and behaviour, many counter examples indicate the opposite (Parkinson 2009).

Political space may have 'cueing' effects upon behaviour, however there are likely to be other, more significant factors, such as party politics, influencing the conduct of representatives. Furthermore, even in cases where buildings are self-consciously designed to promote certain types of behaviour, there will be disparities between intentions and practice, because political space cannot create a culture (Parkinson 2009). As noted above, there are likely to be multiple and even conflicting influences upon the design and maintenance of political buildings and the political culture will reflect these anomalies (Mackay 2009: 54-5). However, this is not to say that the potential influence of mundane aspects of the institution, including its buildings, upon behaviour should be dismissed. The power of banal aspects is their subtle and unchallenged reinforcement of institutional norms and values upon the subconscious of its inhabitants (Goodsell 1988: 288). Constructions of gender visible in and throughout the physical environment could therefore impact upon conceptions and performance of masculinity and femininity. When symbols correspond with the prevailing

institutional norms they are likely to be 'powerful communicators' regarding appropriate modes of behaviour (Parkinson 2009: 11).⁸

Alternative Methods, Focuses and Understandings

There are three distinct contributions this framework of feminist institutionalism offers above and beyond existing studies on gender and Parliament. First, employing these concepts in relation to political institutions calls for ethnographic methods more commonly associated with social anthropology than political science (Harrison 2001: 74-5). Second, it provides an alternative focus to traditional studies of Parliament and directs us to the cultural and informal aspects of institutions that are identified by feminist institutionalists as crucial for mediating the experiences of representatives (Mackay 2008; Franceschet 2009). Third, these concepts provide a lens to understand how seemingly banal aspects of institutions contribute to the institutionalisation of gendered norms. Parliamentary ceremonies, rituals and buildings are said to be amongst the mediating factors in the process through which cultural assumptions are communicated (Bell 2005; Turner 1969; Goodsell 1988). Furthermore, they are thought to contribute to authoritative ways of seeing, and in so doing, close off other possible alternatives (Lukes 1977: 68-9).

Chapter Conclusion

Reflecting the recent turn in gender and politics literature towards institutions, this chapter has sought to establish a working theoretical framework of feminist institutionalism. It takes the lead from the burgeoning feminist institutionalist literature that calls for the explicit employment, and gendering, of neo-institutionalist approaches (Mackay 2011; Kenny 2011; Waylen 2011; Chappell 2011). These scholars build on the claim made in the gender and politics

⁸ Although this discussion of political space follows the review of literature on ceremony and ritual, as becomes clear in the following empirical chapters, parliamentary buildings are considered first. The difference between the conceptual and empirical order is based on reflection that ceremony and ritual are the core concepts of the thesis that led to consideration to political space, but that in terms of how parliament is *experienced*, parliamentary buildings are the first symbols on show. Description of the buildings at the start of the chapter on political space means this order provides a nice lead in to the empirical chapters.

literature that institutional context – the political and gendered environment in which representatives operate – is crucial to understanding the precarious relationship between the descriptive and the substantive representation of women (Lovenduski 2005; Childs and Krook 2006; Mackay 2008). Although feminist institutionalists offer sophisticated insights on gender, power and institutions, they have been less instructive on how to operationalize the insights. Drawing upon literature from within and beyond political science on political ceremony, ritual and space, this chapter has developed a way of doing so. It contends these concepts, typically dismissed in political science as ‘cultural sideshow’ (Crewe 2005: 200), lend well to ethnographic methods not normally used in the gender and politics research; direct attention to the seemingly banal, but potentially revealing, aspects of institutions; and offer insights on institutional norms and power structures. In this way, literature on political ceremony, ritual and space has the potential to offer insights of how cultural and informal aspects of Parliament impact upon the inclusion of women, which may in turn, speak to the broader gender and politics literature by providing greater understanding of how institutional context impacts upon the substantive representation of women (Franceschet 2011).

Chapter 2: Representative Acts and Claims: Understanding Context through Elite Interviews and Participant Observation

Responding to the calls in the gender and politics literature for new methods to capture the environment in which representatives operate (Celis et al 2008; Mackay 2008), this thesis proposes a distinctive approach. As discussed in the last Chapter, informed by feminist institutionalism it employs concepts – ceremony, ritual and political space – from multiple disciplines beyond political science in order to explore the informal and cultural aspects of the parliamentary culture in Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. Given their roots in social anthropology, these concepts lend well to qualitative methods, some of which, notably observation, are underused in political science (Crewe 2005). Composed of three sections, this chapter opens by outlining the aims and objectives of the thesis. The second section provides background for the two case-studies; in particular, it outlines existing gender and politics research on Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. The final section discusses the research design. Greater space is given over to discussion of participant observation than elite interviews, reflecting its less frequent use in existing studies of parliament (Krook and Squires 2006).

Research Aims

- To examine the parliamentary culture at Westminster and at Holyrood.
- To identify ‘cultural assumptions’, in terms of gender, class and race, contained in parliamentary culture.
- To provide insight into how this may or may not impact upon feelings of belonging experienced by representatives.

- To reflect on possible relationships between parliamentary culture and the substantive representation of women.
- To assess the usefulness of this distinctive theoretical framework and methodology for feminist institutionalist approaches.

Research Objectives

- To examine representatives' perceptions and experiences of parliamentary buildings and the spaces within them.
- To examine representatives' perceptions and experiences of parliamentary ceremony.
- To examine representatives' perceptions and experiences of ritualised forms of behaviour in the debating chamber.

Hypotheses

- Political space should be examined because it is a physical embodiment of gendered norms. It contains cultural assumptions which affect sense of belonging and appropriate behaviour amongst representatives.
- Parliamentary ceremonies are worthy of our attention because they convey messages to MPs and MSPs about 'who belongs' and what constitutes appropriate behaviour. They are gendered, shaping representative claims and impacting upon how the substantive representation occurs.
- Ritualised behaviour is a useful analytical concept for examining parliamentary debating style. Ritualised behaviour institutionalises Members to the dominant institutional norms. These are gendered and may impact upon representative claims and, in turn, the substantive representation of women.

Case-Studies

This thesis compares two case-studies: Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. Looking at ceremony, ritual and buildings, in two Parliaments that are, at least on the face of it, so different in these respects, promises to shed greater light on the informal and cultural aspects of both Parliaments and to address the research aims on parliamentary culture and processes of belonging. The concepts are much more associated with Westminster – an institution characterised by a huge degree of pomp and circumstance (Crewe 2005). This is contrasted with the apparent deliberate rejection of ceremony in the Scottish Parliament because of its association with Westminster, which was viewed as, ‘too arcane, with too much antiquated pomp and ceremony, too remote and inaccessible and too much marked by an odd mix of clubbiness and a stylised adversarialism of opposition for its own sake’ (Megaughin and Jeffrey 2009: 9). A comparative approach is taken insofar as the same research methods are used and issues are considered in both Parliaments. However, Westminster might be conceived of as the primary case-study, in that the research objectives on ceremony and ritual are designed with it in mind. Nonetheless, the findings seek to shed light on parliamentary culture in the Scottish Parliament in and of itself.

The Westminster case-study has received greater attention in the gender and politics literature (Mackay 2004). Most empirical research follows the historic increase of women in Westminster following the 1997 general election. This dramatically doubled the number of women from 60 to 120. Of these, 101 were Labour MPs, helping to explain, certainly in the context of the British Parliament (and more widely), the preponderance of feminist political science research in looking at political parties on the left and centre-left of the political spectrum (Childs 2004; cf Childs and Webb 2011). The number of women fell slightly to 118 in the 2001 election (prompting allegations that the macho and family unfriendly nature of the Commons was to blame for some women’s resignations), before rising again in the 2005 to 128 and reaching an all time high of 143 in the most

recent 2010 election.⁹ Although unprecedented, women continue to constitute only 22 per cent of the House of Commons, or one in five Members of Parliament. The majority of this research was carried out before the general election, when women were 19.8 per cent of Members.

Several research methods have been used to explore the impact of women's increased political presence in Westminster. Surveys provide robust evidence of attitudinal difference on women's issues between men and women MPs (and candidates) (Lovenduski and Norris 2003). Elite interviews have shown a widely held perception, and claims amongst women MPs, that they are more likely to 'act for' women than their male colleagues (Childs 2004; Sones et al 2005). Process tracing analysis has been conducted to look at particular aspects of legislative activity. For instance, by examining women's role in welfare reform and other more specific pieces of legislation (Annesley 2010; Childs and Withey 2006), looking at Parliamentary Questions asked on women and equality (Bird 2005), language and behaviour used by men and women MPs in the Commons chamber (Shaw 2000), Early Day Motions signed by MPs (Childs and Withey 2004), and sex differences in party rebellion (Cowley and Childs 2003).

These studies, which provide 'circumstantial' evidence of a relationship between the descriptive and substantive representation of women (Lovenduski 2005), point to, albeit not always explicitly, or in the conceptual terms of feminist institutionalism, the importance of masculine institutional norms in mediating this relationship. Crucial to understanding this in the context of Westminster is the role of political party in influencing identity, views and behaviour: political party is the 'lens' through which MPs interpret, 'Westminster's procedures and cultures' (Rush and Giddings 2011: 227). Women MPs (and like their male colleagues) are more likely to follow the party whip than act according to what we might expect to be in 'women's interest' (whatever that may be) (Childs and Webb 2011; Cowley and Stuart 2009; Lovenduski 2005), meaning that an

⁹ House of Commons Information Services. 'Women in the House of Commons'. Factsheet M4 Members Series. revised June 2010.

understanding of how sex and gender intersect with party identity is necessary when analysing MPs' behaviour (Childs 2004).

The Commons 'procedures and culture' contain, moreover, gendered norms (Lovenduski 2005, Puwar 2004, Childs 2004). Masculinity is privileged in the House of Commons, where the, 'practices and procedures that developed constitute a particular gender regime that is hostile to women and femininity and supportive only of traditional forms of femininity' (Lovenduski 2005: 147). This is evident from the generally adversarial culture, the family unfriendly hours – which, even after reform, run frequently until 10pm,¹⁰ and the particularly combative behaviour needed for the chamber with which, it is argued, 'many men are comfortable and most women are not' (Lovenduski 2005). Men and women MPs have to deal with masculinity and femininity in different ways – femininity must be managed and there is a 'burden of doubt' upon female bodies to prove they are capable (Puwar 2004: 91-7). In this way, so it goes, the Commons parliamentary culture privileges the 'male-politician-norm' whilst identifying women as 'other', 'female-politician-pretender' (Childs 2008: 142).

Such analysis fits with findings from the small number of studies that consider MPs' attitudes towards the parliamentary culture, particularly those aspects – ceremony, ritual and buildings – considered in this thesis. Rush and Giddings find, in their recent study of socialisation to Westminster culture amongst newly elected MPs, that Labour women MPs elected in 1997 particularly disliked how the Commons operated – more specifically its archaic procedures, norms and ceremonial practices (Rush and Giddings 2011: 205). Moreover, interviews with women MPs elected in 1997 provide plentiful anecdotal evidence of the widespread discontent with, what is perceived by many newly elected MPs, as the outdated culture and procedures (Sones et al 2005). Speaking in 1997 for instance, Hazel Blears describes the interior of Westminster, 'it was full of wood

¹⁰ See blog by Childs and Malley, 'Reforming when MPs work is not about making their lives easier but ensuring the most effective balance between constituency and parliamentary time', *British Politics and Policy at LSE*, 12th July 2011.
<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/2011/07/12/reforming-when-mps-work/>

panelling, flock wallpaper, patterned carpets, tiled floors and it had all the hallmarks of what I imagined to be a kind of public school, populated by messengers in archaic tailcoats and lots of large men around the place' (Sones et al 2005: 15). Such reflections are not uncommon and are frequently used to support the argument by many women MPs that Westminster culture is more fitting for the 19th Century.¹¹

In contrast to the low numbers of women and alleged masculine culture at Westminster, gender equality was core to the campaign for the Scottish Parliament and an integral part of the 'new politics' narrative that developed around it. Feminist demands for equal representation of men and women chimed well with the 'democratic deficit' arguments used to argue for devolution. Women activists and feminist ideas were successfully mobilised in the Scottish Constitutional Convention – the body which led the campaign for the Scottish Parliament – and they assumed a pivotal role in the design of the institution (Mackay 2006). The campaign for a Scottish Parliament was closely related to a vision of how it would operate and there was a conscious attempt to foster a political culture different from Westminster (Brown 2000). This is evident from the final report of the Scottish Constitutional Convention in 1995:

From this process we have emerged with the powerful hope that the coming of the Scottish Parliament will usher in a way of politics that is radically different from the rituals of Westminster; more participative, more creative, less confrontational... a culture of openness which will enable the people to see how decisions are being taken in their name, and why. The Parliament we propose is much more than a mere institutional adjustment. It is a means, not an end' (cited in Brown 2000: 542).

¹¹ See Sones et al (2005), Childs (2004) for plentiful examples, as well as a variety of MP's blogs, e.g. see Diane Abbott, 21/10/09, <http://www.dianeabbott.org.uk/news/articles/news.aspx?p=102528> accessed October 2011. Kerry McCarthy, 10/02/10, <http://kerry-mccarthy.blogspot.com/2010/02/i-bet-you-look-good-on-dancefloor.html>, accessed October 2011.

It was hoped that the 'new politics' heralded for the Scottish Parliament would provide a more inclusive and participative culture for women representatives and the represented (Mackay 2004). It was envisaged that more consensual and cooperative politics would be less adversarial than the yah-boo politics of the Commons and that family-friendly hours and parliamentary crèche would permit work-life balance as well as contain symbolic value in communicating this as an institutional value (Brown 2000). The number of women returned to the first session of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 boded well for the success of the commitment to gender equality (Breitenbach and Mackay 2001). At 37 per cent, or 45 of 129, Scotland was internationally competitive in its representation of women. This figure reached a high in the 2003 election at 39.53 per cent. However, it dropped to 33 per cent in 2007 and rose only slightly to 34 per cent in the most recent 2011 Scottish elections.¹² The fall reflects the overall decline in the Scottish Labour Party, the party who returned the greatest number of female representatives and who had used equality guarantees in the 1999 elections (Childs et al 2005).

Moreover, there is consensus in the academic literature that the 'new politics' agenda has not played out as intended. Assessing the Scottish Parliament ten years after devolution, scholars agree that apparent differences between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament may conceal more crucial similarities, not least in the context of the party political culture in both (Carman & Shepherd 2009; Johnston 2009; Keating & Cairney 2009; McMillan 2009; Mackay 2009; Mitchell 2010). The tendency to over-exaggerate differences is based on a romantic view of the Scottish Parliament and a caricature of Westminster, 'despite efforts to be different from Westminster, and perhaps because of this, Holyrood is very much the child of Westminster. It is in its DNA.' (Mitchell 2010: 98). Accordingly, this suggests that although the Scottish Parliament is often

¹² Data collected from 'Election Results 2011', *The Guardian* DataBlog, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/may/09/scottish-parliament-northern-ireland-welsh-assembly-election-results-diversity#data>. Accessed May 2011.

presented as a clean slate – an opportunity to create new institutional norms that would replace the worst of Westminster’s perceived elitist, stuffy and outdated traditions with more inclusive norms of equality and accessibility – the newness of a new institution is ‘nested’ in the institutions it emerges from and takes cues from (Mackay 2010). In other words, the Scottish Parliament may appear very different to Westminster, but executive dominance and strong party loyalty and party politics are much the same (Keating and Cairney 2009).

Research Design

Qualitative methods are most suitable for examining the core concerns of this research, none of which can be easily quantified through counting or simple measuring (Crewe 2005). A two-pronged research strategy is used on the grounds that a combination of qualitative methods provides a more robust way of interrogating the research aims and strengthens the validity of findings (Harrison 2001: 83). First, it conducts elite interviews with MPs and MSPs. Second, it employs participant observation through eight ‘shadowing placements’ with MPs and MSPs. Elite interviews are the primary method in that they form the bulk of data and analysis in the empirical chapters. As discussed in the previous Chapter, elite interviews are frequently drawn upon by feminist scholars (for instance, Childs and Webb 2011; Childs 2004; Mackay 2001), and are the most suitable technique for examining representatives’ attitudes here towards parliamentary buildings, ceremony and ritualised behaviour. Interviews offer insight into MPs’ and MSPs’ perceptions and provide data that can be systematically compared within and between the two Parliaments.

However, exploring the seemingly banal aspects of the institution that are integral to the research aims and objectives – benefits from ethnographic methods used less commonly in gender and politics research and political science generally. It was hoped that participant observation would be able to explore mundane aspects of parliamentary culture and behaviour that are less likely to be captured through interviews. Used to introduce each chapter, the data collected through participant observation provides ‘a flavour’ of the subsequent interview

data with 'thick description' of a particular event, scene or experience (Wittman 2010). It is, moreover, reflected upon in the discussion section of the empirical chapters to corroborate and further illustrate claims made in interviews and, or to challenge them. This combination of methods speaks to the concern in feminist institutionalist approaches with the impact of informal and everyday aspects of Parliament for shaping representatives' experiences and strategies (Franceschet 2011; Mackay 2008), and to the claim in the literature on ceremony and ritual that, for instance, ritualised behaviour is often oblivious, and based on habit, rather than conscious reasoning (Goffman 1979; Bloch 2005).

Elite Interviews

Interviews are succinctly defined as, 'an encounter between a researcher and a respondent, where the respondent's answers provide the raw data' (Harrison 2001: 90). Qualitative interviews are based on the notion that individuals have distinctive and valuable knowledge that can provide thick description of the social context. The goal is to obtain rich qualitative data from the perspective of particular individuals on a focused topic (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006: 119-23). Elite interviews tend to be done with experts in a field, who are generally influential, and often decision-makers (Leech 2002: 663). An invaluable way to learn about a political actor's own experiences and perceptions, elite interviews are a common method in political science and have been widely deployed, often in conjunction with other methods, in gender and politics research in particular (see for example, Childs 2004; Mackay 2001; Childs and Webb 2011). This reflects a general feminist concern with giving a voice to historically marginalised groups (Reinharz 1992) and the inadequacy of quantitative methods in capturing some aspects of how the substantive representation of women occurs in political institutions (Krook and Squires 2006).

Elite interviews are suitable for this research because they provide a way to probe into the cultural and informal aspects of the institution that are not easily measured through quantitative methods. A large number of qualitative interviews will provide rigorous and comparable data – both within and between

Parliaments, and with the participant observation data – to explore the aims and objectives of the research. Necessary to explore perceptions and everyday experiences of those who participate in Westminster and the Scottish Parliament, interviews with representatives are intended to provide insight, from their own perspective, into feelings of belonging in relation to the parliamentary culture. They speak to the research aims outlined at the beginning of the Chapter by exploring perceptions of the ‘cultural assumptions’ contained in parliamentary culture, if and how this affects feelings of inclusion or marginalisation to Parliament, and whether representatives themselves perceive this to impact upon their behaviour, and in turn, the substantive representation of women. To this end, interviews address the objectives of the research by asking questions related to the core concepts of the research on parliamentary ceremony, ritual and buildings.

In total, over sixty semi-structured elite interviews were conducted. As can be seen from Tables 2.1 and 2.2, this includes 41 with MPs at Westminster and 24 with MSPs at the Scottish Parliament. The sample is made up of MPs and MSPs who are known to be active on women’s issues (mostly, but not only women) and a matching sample of those not similarly known. This sample is not representative in terms of either sex or party, however it includes men and women from the main political parties in both case-studies. It therefore responds to criticism of feminist research that looks primarily at women representatives and benefits from the gender and politics literature that emphasises the importance of not presuming that only women are active on women’s issues (Celis et al 2008).

A systematic sampling method was used to identify two groups: MPs known to be active on women’s issues and a matched sample of MPs who are not publicly known to be active on women’s issues. The first group was identified through a combination of sampling methods in order to capture those MPs/MSPs both perceived to and claiming to ‘act for’ women. It was hoped that such a wide-ranging sampling method would identify people from all parties and include both

women and men representatives. First, 'expert' snowballing was conducted, whereby a range of academic and practitioner experts on Parliament were asked to recommend representatives they perceive as, 'publicly active on women's issues'. Experts included, across the two case-studies, five gender and politics academic scholars, four leading campaigners, four politicians and four parliamentary information service staff. The results were collated and MPs/MSPs who repeatedly appeared formed the basis of the sample. Second, representatives interested in women's issues were identified from membership of relevant All Party Groups (APG) in Westminster (including Breast Cancer, Domestic Violence, Equalities, Population Development & Reproductive Health, Pro-Choice and Sexual Health, Pro-Life, Prostitution and Global Sexual Trade, Sex Equality, Trafficking of Women & Children, Women in Science, Engineering and Technology, Women in the Penal System, Women Parliamentarians UK, India, etc, Women Peace & Security, Men's Health, Race & Community and Cross Party Groups in the Scottish Parliament (including Carers, Sexual Health, Men's Violence Against Women and Children). Third, this list was checked against Dod's Parliamentary biographies to ensure these representatives self-identify as active in women's issues.

The second group was identified through a 'matching' process. This was intended to enable comparison between the perceptions and experiences of parliamentary culture of MPs known to be active on women's issues and those who are not. MPs were matched, as closely as possible, according to their parliamentary experience (for instance, where possible, ex-Ministers were matched with ex-Ministers) their party, their cohort, their age, the second party in their constituency, their majority and the demography of their constituency in terms of the percentage of professional/manual, social renters, non-whites and urban/rural. Several backup 'matched' MPs were selected for each identified MP. This sample was intended to, as far as possible, eliminate other obvious differences between the MPs identified as publicly active on women's issues and those not.

In all cases, interviews were semi-structured, following an interview schedule, covering similar topics whilst allowing the interviewee to raise issues they consider important (see Appendix). Most interviews lasted for around one hour and all were recorded and fully transcribed. All interviews were anonymous, meaning that data which might reveal identity has not been used or has only been used with permission. The vast majority were carried out at Westminster or the Scottish Parliament. In Westminster, normally in the MP's parliamentary office, the atrium of Portcullis House, or the tearoom or the Terrace in the Palace. Similarly in the Scottish Parliament, interviews were usually done in the MSP's office and sometimes in the Garden Lobby. Exceptions include three phone interviews, three meetings in central London/Edinburgh and my own constituency MP who came to my flat.

Interview questions inevitably impacted upon the responses. For example, at Westminster, MPs were asked generally about their views of 'parliamentary ceremony, traditions and customs'. The synonymous use of these terms was intentional so as not to unnecessarily limit the topics for discussion and in order to shed light on what they perceive as the most important parliamentary ceremonies. In the Scottish Parliament, MSPs were asked about their views of ceremonies in relation to Westminster. Hence Chapter 4 'Cultural Sideshow' provides insight into Scottish representatives' perceptions of a particular type of Westminster-style ceremony. These interviewees were also asked about the founding principles of the Scottish Parliament, which on occasion resulted in spontaneous discussion of the absence of Westminster style ceremony.

The interview data was analysed inductively – meaning that themes relevant to the research questions were identified – after the vast majority of interviews had been completed (Harrison 2001: 102-3). This involved reading each interview several times and making general notes on interesting points. Because of the large volume of data, each transcript was then sorted according to the research objectives of the thesis – relevant data was 'cut and pasted' from the original transcript to a document on each theme, where further, more detailed notes

were made. During analysis, it was helpful to roughly group MPs according to their views on that theme – this formed the basis of the *traditionalist, minimiser and critics* categories used in each empirical chapter (Chapters 3-5). No such categories emerged from the Scottish data, meaning that, for clarity, MSPs are grouped according to their views on particular issues. In the empirical chapters, illustrative quotes – both those that support and those that contradict the research hypotheses – were selected from the interview transcripts and described according to the research objectives. These are then further analysed in the discussion section of the empirical chapter, where additional reflections are made based on the data collected through participant observation (see below).

Westminster

The majority of interviews with MPs were conducted before the 2010 general election. Twelve were done afterwards, but only with MPs who held their seat rather than newcomers. In total, 41 interviews were undertaken with men and women MPs from the three largest political parties. There was a good response rate amongst those MPs identified as active on women’s issues. Of the 34 asked, 21 agreed to be interviewed. As can be seen from Table 2.1, this includes 11 Labour MPs, six Conservative and four Liberal Democrat. Ensuring the participation of the matched MPs offered more of a challenge, not least given the impending general election, as well as an understandable reluctance of MPs to participate in a research topic they do not necessarily consider relevant to them. Nonetheless, despite early difficulties and after a great deal of persistence, an almost entirely even number of interviews were carried out with male MPs not known to be active on women’s issues.

Table 2.1 Interview Sample, Westminster

	Identified MPs	Matched MPs	TOTAL
Labour	11 (52%)	10 (50%)	21

Lib Dem	4 (19%)	4 (20%)	8
Tory	6 (29%)	6 (30%)	12
TOTAL	21	20	41

Scottish Parliament

Interviews were conducted in the Scottish Parliament between April and May 2010. Once again, the agreement of identified MSPs was easier to attain than those matched and some MSPs were ultimately unable to participate in interviews because of the general election.¹³ In total, 24 MSPs were interviewed. This includes 14 identified MSPs from the four main political parties: seven Labour, four SNP, two Conservative and one Liberal Democrat. Ten matched MSPs were interviewed, including three Labour, three SNP, two Liberal Democrat and two Conservative. Table 2.2 shows that Labour matched MSPs are the most under-represented group in the sample.

Table 2.2 Interview Sample, Scottish Parliament

	Identified MSPs	Matched MSPs	TOTAL
Labour	7 (50%)	3 (30%)	10
Lib Dem	1 (7%)	2 (20%)	3
SNP	4 (29%)	3 (30%)	7
Tory	2 (14%)	2 (20%)	4
TOTAL	14 (58%)	10 (42%)	24

Participant Observation

As discussed in Chapter 1, the predominant methods used by feminist political scientists are elite interviews, surveys and legislative analysis (Krook and Squires

¹³ Though elections for the Scottish Parliament are separate from the general election, MSPs were nonetheless busy campaigning on behalf of their party candidates in this period.

2006). Reflecting its parent discipline, few feminist political scientists have used ethnographic methods that are more commonly used in sociology and social anthropology (Wittman 2010). The umbrella term ethnography includes participant observation, alongside informal interviews and documentary analysis. Participant observation, defined simply by Richard Fenno as, 'soaking and poking – or just hanging around', is underused as an explicit method in political science, but has the potential to benefit research on parliaments (Fenno 1978: 249). The benefits of participant observation, in shedding greater light on behind-the-scenes activities and providing more insight into the informal relations involved in the processes of representation, speak to shortcomings identified in the gender and politics literature (Celis et al 2008). More particularly, they speak to recent calls for new research design and methods that capture a more holistic conception of representation by looking more closely at the environment in which representatives operate (Mackay 2008; Squires 2008), and are necessary for this research which is concerned with capturing banal aspects of Westminster and Scottish Parliamentary culture unlikely to emerge in interviews.

Participant observation involves, 'prolonged participation of the researcher in the daily life of a group... and his or her attempt to empathize with the norms, values and behaviour of that group' (Punch 1993: 183). A distinction can be made between this and non-participant observation where the researcher watches from the sidelines. Whilst non-participant observation has the benefit of not 'contaminating' the research setting, it limits the opportunity to learn the perspectives of those being studied, and critically, it is unsuitable for many research environments where the fast-paced nature of events makes passive observing unfeasible or inappropriate (Dargie 1998). In many cases, particularly a busy environment such as Parliament, and because of the dependence of researchers upon the people they shadow, participating and watching are likely to overlap, making such a distinction difficult to maintain (Fielding 2001; Moug 2007; Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006).

The scarcity of participant observation as a stated method in political science is perhaps indicative of problems associated with its use (Fenno 1978; Dargie 1998; Harrison 2001). Limitations in respect to political science research include first, practical difficulties; second, validity of data; and third, concerns about impartiality. Obtaining the necessary access to busy (and often private) political figures and spaces is a primary reason this approach is not more commonly used in political science (Dargie 1998). Claims tend to be based on a few select cases and, similarly to other qualitative research methods, these cannot be replicated, causing problems for those concerned with the validity of the data (Harrison 2001). The method relies on the researcher's observations and there is a risk they gain a one-sided view of the institution. As a result, findings may be considered insufficiently rigorous and overly dependent on subjective interpretation (Fenno 1978). The related issue of impartiality addresses the relationship between the researcher and researched. Feminist concerns about an exploitative relationship between the researcher and researched (Oakley 1981) are perhaps not such a problem in the case of researching Parliament where the power balance tends to lie firmly in the favour of MPs (Puwar 1997). However, a concern running throughout nearly all methods literature on participant observation addresses the dangers of 'going native' whereby researchers become so immersed in the research setting they lose critical perspective. Becoming an apologist for the institution or the group being studied is raised retrospectively as an issue for many researchers using ethnographic methods (Fenno 1978; Crewe 2005).

Participant observation must be embarked on and used carefully in order to address these issues (Dargie 1998). Clarity and building trust, particularly with gatekeepers, are essential for overcoming problems of gaining and maintaining access. Concerns about the validity of data collection are addressed by detailed and systematic field notes (Fielding 2001: 152-3). Criticisms of the non-generalisable nature of participant observation methods can be defended against by aiming for a variety of cases and, more crucially, on the grounds that these methods trade breadth for depth (Fenno 1978: 254). In terms of impartiality, and as with all research methods, it is necessary to be aware and open about possible

limitations and implications of the research methods during data analysis. Discussions about the difficulties of achieving a balance between trust and objectivity ignore that all research and their methods are filtered by the researcher's assumptions, interests and interpretations (Morris 2009). Calls for a reflexive approach are therefore well made for any comprehensive research and 'good' social science (Lovenduski 2011). Ultimately though, participant observation is best used in conjunction with other research methods, for instance in respect of Parliament through elite interviews, process-tracing or use of survey data, in order to corroborate findings.

Notwithstanding its limited use – and criticisms levelled at ethnography in general – the few instances of ethnographic political science indicate its potential value (Fenno 1978; Wittman 2010). In the case of Emma Crewe's study of the House of Lords, participant observation provided an opportunity to learn more about the parliamentary culture, often hidden from public view, in which parliamentarians operate (Crewe 2005). Watching and talking to political representatives as they go about their normal business has the potential to enable researchers to get beyond the stylised narratives that politicians are in the habit of, and often very skilled at, imparting (Fenno 1978). Researchers are not dependent only upon recollections of representatives (Dargie 1998), nor the self-congratulatory accounts of events likely to emerge in formal interviews (Harrison 2001). They can furthermore see reactions to events as they occur, and provided trust develops in the relationship between researcher and the researched, are privy to offhand remarks and unselfconscious reflections. In this way, participant observation enables insight into the context of political life and environments of 'Westminster village' and Holyrood, to grasp the big picture of the multiple influences and pressures under which MPs and MSPs operate and is invaluable for building additional contacts who might be willing to help at later stages of the research.

Participant observation has the additional potential to provide new insight into the gendered institutional context identified as critical for understanding how the

substantive representation of women occurs (Lovenduski 2005). In providing an opportunity for 'thick description', it probes into the informal and cultural aspects of the institution that affect representatives' everyday experiences (Mackay 2008; Wittman 2010; Franceschet 2011). In so doing, participant observation responds to recent calls for methods that are able to capture more holistic and sophisticated conceptions of representation. By providing access to the culture and MPs beyond the individual being shadowed, participant observation does not presume in advance who is likely to represent women's interests. It opens the forum for representation beyond the legislature to activities around and outside Parliament, does not limit what should be considered 'women's interests' and looks beyond policy outcome in identifying attempts to represent women (Celis 2008; Celis et al 2008; Severs 2010). In providing access to behind-the-scenes activities and to informal behaviour, participant observation therefore addresses some of the empirical shortcomings identified in the gender and politics literature.

More specifically, participant observation addresses explicitly the research aims and objectives of this thesis. In providing first-hand understanding of the environment in which representatives operate, it allows the opportunity to compare the contrasting parliamentary cultures of Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. It permits observation of the way in which norms embodied in parliamentary ceremony, buildings and ritualised behaviour impact upon the everyday experiences of representatives. Furthermore, rather than simply relying on representatives' perceptions of the importance of these informal and cultural aspects of parliament – frequently dismissed as 'cultural sideshow' – spending time with MPs and MSPs as they go about their daily functions provides insight into how these aspects affect their routine and, perhaps, unremarkable activities.

'Soaking and Poking' at Westminster and Holyrood

Participant observation was conducted in Westminster and the Scottish Parliament through 'shadowing placements' with MPs and MSPs. The initial method employed in this research – undertaken before elite interviews with

elected representatives – it was used to inform subsequent in-depth interviews. Representatives were asked to participate in the shadowing placements based on their reputations for being active on women's issues and were identified based on the advice of experts – academic and practitioner – on both Parliaments and the existing literature on the substantive representation of women (Sones 2005; Evans 2007; Childs 2008). One obvious limitation of this sample is, of course, that it does not enable comparison with representatives who are not known for being publicly active on women's issues. This reflects the point addressed above, that the time consuming nature of this method inevitably limits the sample and trades breadth for depth (Fenno 1978). However, while shadowing MPs and MSPs who are known for being active on women's issues enables *particular* understanding of the culture from their perspective, an advantage of participant observation is to provide insight into the *general* culture in which representatives operate.

As can be seen from Tables 2.3 and 2.4, my role during the shadowing placements ranged from complete observer to complete participant. This varied by occasion and so as to be undistruptive as possible.¹⁴ The nature of the event affected how data was recorded. As recommended by the research methods literature, notes were taken, when suitable, during events and written up more fully at other opportunities throughout the day (Fielding 2001). They were supplemented in greater detail from memory each evening and typed up weekly in full. Notes were based on observation of events, interaction between participants and on conversations with MPs/MSPs and others. They included detailed description of unfolding events, verbatim quotes, notes on relevant documents and analysis of the parliamentary environment, procedures and activities. Analysis was an ongoing process throughout and after the placements. During the placements, analysis was highlighted separately, as much as possible, from a more basic description of events. Analysis was an iterative process, in that during the writing up stage, data collected from each of the placements grew in

¹⁴ Please see below for a description of the various activities while on placement. The varying levels of participating compared to observing during my shadowing placements question how meaningful a clear distinction made between them in the literature is in practice.

significance and took on different meanings in light of one another. After the placements, data was analysed inductively, whereby key themes relevant to the theoretical framework were picked out.

Westminster

Participant observation was conducted in Westminster prior to the 2010 general election, between March 2009 and June 2009. Around 15 requests were made to MPs known to be active on women's issues from the three largest parties, and placements were carried out with four of the MPs who agreed: two Labour, both female, and two Liberal Democrats, one female and one male. Unfortunately, and as an illustration of the problem of access, placements with Conservative Party MPs were not undertaken due to availability around the time of the general election. While the value of the placements lies in their ability to provide insight into the general environment and culture in which MPs operate, this inevitably limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised across political party.

While each were asked because they are known to be active on women's issues, it became clear during the placements that the MPs had different views on what constitutes women's issues, how they are most effectively represented and the extent to which they regarded themselves as active on them. These differing attitudes are important to note because they impact on the significance of particular perspectives observed during the placements. Three of the MPs were previously Minister/Spokesperson for women, were familiar with gender inequality discourse, had a reputation in their party as being active on women's issues and are described as feminists or active on women's issues in the Dod's Parliamentary Companion.¹⁵ However, one of the MPs, while interested in issues such as childcare, did not particularly regard herself as an advocate for women and can be described as being less conscious of gender.

¹⁵ Dod's Parliamentary Companion is an authoritative politics reference book published annually in the UK which provides biographical information on MPs.

Each placement lasted between two to four weeks and involved spending the working day in Parliament or the constituency. The ‘working day’ varied depending on the MP. For some of the placements, I assumed an ‘intern’ role, doing a 9-5 day. For other placements, I shadowed the MP throughout their full working day which frequently continued until after 10pm. All of the placements involved some time spent in the parliamentary office, where I was privy to an enormous amount of relevant documents; papers from official positions; information gathered on topics of interest; and letters sent from constituents and groups. Each of the placements also included some time spent watching debates in the chamber or committees and attending other parliamentary events. Thereafter, the range of activities varied hugely depending on unfolding events and the preferences of the MP (summarised in Table 2.3). In all cases, the placements involved watching and listening to ongoing activities. They included casual conversations with MPs in their offices, over lunches, and in between and during events. Many of the meetings and functions were attended by colleagues, providing the opportunity to observe interaction, and for conversations with other MPs, Peers and the researchers of the shadowed MPs. The close proximity of many researchers to Parliament, and the MP they work for, meant their views and running commentary on events provided an additional and unexpected rich data source.

Table 2.3 Shadowing Placement Activities, Westminster

	MP1	MP2	MP3	MP4
Parliamentary Office.	X	X	X	X
Constituency events, e.g. school visits, meeting with councillors, canvassing.	X		X	X
Party meetings, e.g. women’s working group, regional alliance.		X	X	X
Chamber.	X	X	X	X
Committee, e.g. Public Bill, Select.				X
Official meetings, e.g. All Party Groups.			X	X
Informal meetings, e.g. party colleagues,		X	X	X

lunches.				
Parliamentary functions, e.g. Family Planning Association event.		X	X	X

Scottish Parliament

Placements in the Scottish Parliament were carried out in the period between March and June 2010; so before the 2011 Scottish election and when the SNP were a minority government. Given the greater number of dominant political parties in the Scottish Parliament, a disproportionately high number of placements, when compared with Westminster, were carried out – four in total. For this reason, and justified by the smaller size of the Scottish Parliament, each placement lasted one week. While each placement lasted only one week, I continued to frequently see the MSPs I had previously shadowed and was occasionally invited to attend relevant events with them, for example, the Women’s Dinner. The third MSP shadowed applied for a parliamentary pass on my behalf, which enabled me to walk around the building unaccompanied, and invited me to continue to use her office as a base after the placement had finished and during interviews.

Once again, requests were made on the basis of academic and practitioner advice on MSPs, from different parties, known to be active on women’s issues. Unlike Westminster, all of the four MSPs asked to participate in the shadowing placements agreed very quickly. This included two Labour MSPs, one Scottish Nationalist Party MSP and one Conservative MSP. The unrepresentative nature of this sample, in terms of Labour being over-represented, owes to the unexpected ease with which placement requests were agreed to. All were female, two were former government ministers and one was a party spokesperson.

The nature of the shadowing placements was very similar to those in Westminster. Once again, I shadowed the MSP throughout their working day and often into the evening for more informal social occasions. As can be seen from Table 2.4, in all cases they involved observing the shadowed MSP in the chamber,

during their meetings with their parliamentary researchers, outside groups and other visitors, and, in all but one case, in committee and their constituency/region. All of the placements involved casual conversation with the shadowed MSP in their parliamentary office, over lunch and between events, and all provided the opportunity to chat informally to other MSPs and parliamentary staff including researchers, information services (SPICE), security guards and cleaners. My access as a ‘participant’ was perhaps greater in the Scottish Parliament than in Westminster as a result of holding a parliamentary pass. As well as providing practical access, in being able to walk around the building unaccompanied, there was a sense that I was treated more as an ‘insider’ by parliamentary staff.

Table 2.4 Shadowing Placement Activities, Scottish Parliament

	MSP 1	MSP 2	MSP 3	MSP 4
Parliamentary Office.	X	X	X	X
Committee.	X		X	X
Chamber.	X	X	X	X
Constituency/Regional events, e.g. surgery, campaigning.		X	X	X
Official meetings, e.g. Cross Party Group, with interest group, visitor.	X	X	X	X
Informal meetings, e.g. with researchers, party colleagues, lunches, shopping.	X	X	X	X
Parliamentary functions, e.g. Women’s Dinner, performance in the Garden Lobby.	X	X	X	X
Other evening event, e.g. informal dinner.	X	X	X	

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter will be operationalized for empirical research at Westminster

and the Scottish Parliament. It makes explicit the starting assumptions of the research by clearly stating the research aims, objectives and hypotheses, and provides relevant background material for the two case-studies. The theoretical framework – informed by feminist institutionalism and developed with concepts, from political science and beyond, on ceremony, ritual and political buildings – is explored through a two-pronged research design. Elite interviews, which are commonly used in the gender and politics literature, are employed to provide insight into MPs' and MSPs' perceptions of parliamentary culture. This data, which can be systematically compared and analysed, constitutes the majority of the empirical chapters. Participant observation, used less frequently in political science, is conducted in order to explore mundane aspects of the parliamentary culture that are unlikely to be captured through interviews. This data is used to introduce the empirical chapters with illustrative vignettes, to corroborate and, or challenge claims made in interviews, and to further reflect on the research questions. This distinctive research design is appropriate for examining the cultural and informal aspects of Westminster and Holyrood and offers an innovative way to operationalize both feminist institutionalist insights, and those on political ceremony, ritual and buildings, in these two Parliaments.

Chapter 3: “First we shape our buildings, then our buildings shape us”? [Winston Churchill 1943]

It is a Thursday afternoon, the fourth day of a shadowing placement with a Liberal Democrat MP, and I am walking from lunch in the Terrace Café back to the office in 1 Parliament Street with a parliamentary researcher and intern. Walking through the Palace, we are talking about the deference typically shown to MPs by parliamentary staff and officials. Pointing to an old oil portrait, the researcher thinks that the “entrenched hierarchy” is due to a sense of history. “Look at the place”, she tells me, “it’s the old-fashioned building... the pictures of old Prime Ministers. The grandiosity gives the sense that something has happened here. Things like the signs giving precedence to MPs reinforce it. Signs are in the lifts, the canteen, even the souvenir shop... come on, why would they need priority in the souvenir shop?” She worries that working in Parliament will gradually change her views – “even coming through security is de-radicalising. It’s about conforming and legitimately belonging.” Joining in the conversation, the intern agrees, “it’s difficult to explain, it’s just a sense, about having a reverence for history and not wanting to rock the boat.” Coming up the escalator from the underpass that links the parliamentary estate, we walk into the atrium of Portcullis House. Bright and bustling, the Adjournment Café is still busy with people eating lunch and the central seating area is packed with MPs, parliamentary researchers and visitors. “This place”, the researcher comments, “has a completely different atmosphere. The indoor fig trees are a bit surreal, but it at least looks like a modern workplace”.¹⁶

¹⁶ Fieldnotes, Westminster, 30/04/09.

It is a Tuesday, and I am in Committee Room 12 of Westminster Palace watching the morning session of committee debate on the Equalities Bill. Looking around, I am struck by the contrast in the layout, décor and atmosphere of this room compared with The Thatcher Room in Portcullis House, where I watched a select committee the week before. Spacious, bright and modern, with a larger seating area for the public, the purpose-built committee room in Portcullis House looked and felt like a more welcoming space for visitors. There, nametags identified MPs, and a wall-to-wall tapestry picture depicting crowds milling and embossed with words such as 'democracy', 'equality' and 'vote', provided the backdrop to the horseshoe seating arrangements for Members. Here, seating arrangements are oppositional and the high ceilinged room is decorated with grand chandeliers, dark wood panelling and large ink portraits of military heroes and bygone politicians. In the ceremonial language used by the committee Chair, 'Is it your pleasure that the amendment be withdrawn?', and the often fierce exchange taking place between Members over the minutiae of amendments, Committee Room 12 looks and sounds like a mini replica of Westminster's chamber.¹⁷

It is a Tuesday evening and I am at the end of my first day shadowing at the Scottish Parliament. Foremost in my first impressions are its differences from Westminster. Immediately upon my arrival, and throughout the day, its more welcoming atmosphere has struck me. From the quick and easy entrance to the building – a smiling security guard jokes about the terrible Scottish weather and quickly gives me the all clear – to the large reception area which, lined with a row of information desks and a visitors' café, feels like an open space for visitors. Symbols of equality – a founding principle promoted in the campaign for the Scottish Parliament – are physically manifested throughout the building. Within minutes of arrival, I notice signs on the

¹⁷ Fieldnotes, Westminster, 16/06/09.

toilet doors, unusually on the men's as well as the women's, offering baby changing facilities. Once collected by the MSP I am shadowing and walking towards the pass-holders' area, I see the entrance to the crèche. Further along, large pictures on the wall depict groups of children, young people, women and ethnic minorities.¹⁸

It is a Wednesday at 10am and, in the middle of my third shadowing placement at the Scottish Parliament, I am struck by the familiarity I have already developed with MSPs and staff on my corridor. Now fully equipped with a parliamentary pass and able to walk around the building unaccompanied, people smile, say hello, or briefly chat, as I pass down the corridor on the way to get a coffee. Indeed, I have noticed throughout this week and previous shadowing placements that the open plan design of offices along a long corridor appears to be good for communication and spontaneous interaction (though not necessarily concentration!), in a way not observed at Westminster, and communal seating areas provide a space for casual collaboration. However, generally limited to Members of the same party – most corridors are separated by political party, with the first floor occupied by Labour, the second floor shared by Labour and the Liberal Democrats, the third floor by the Tories, the fourth floor by the SNP (and two Greens) and the fifth floor entirely by the SNP – I wonder whether the easy camaraderie observed is helped by the fact most inhabitants are from the same political party, and whether there are fewer opportunities for Members and staff across political parties to mix informally.¹⁹

Introduction

The iconic parliamentary buildings of Westminster Palace and the Scottish Parliament are amongst the most visible of differences between the two institutions. The primary attraction of Westminster's parliamentary estate, the

¹⁸ Fieldnotes, Scottish Parliament, 23/03/10.

¹⁹ Fieldnotes, Scottish Parliament, 12/05/10.

Palace of Westminster was built in gothic style after the great fire of 1834 and is an internationally recognised symbol of British democracy. Upon entering the Palace via the main entrance, St Stephen's, visitors arrive at Westminster Hall – the oldest remaining part of the parliamentary estate. Historically used as a law court, including the trial of Charles I, and as the stage for feasts, coronation banquets and other state occasions, the Hall is vast in size and stature and boasts an impressive hammer beam roof. St Stephen's Hall at the south end of Westminster Hall, lined with oil paintings and statues of famous parliamentarians, leads into Central Lobby. The core of the Palace, Central lobby is a vaulted room, richly decorated with an intricate tiled floor, arched mosaic ceiling, statues and a large grand chandelier. It provides access to a maze of corridors and rooms, the House of Commons chamber on one side and the House of Lords chamber on the other. Following vast damage to the parliamentary estate during the Second World War, Winston Churchill famously insisted that an exact replication of the Commons chamber be constructed. He argued that the adversarial layout was crucial for the two-party system, arguing that, 'we shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us' (see Figures 1-3).²⁰

The gothic style of the Palace is juxtaposed with *Portcullis House* (PCH). The newest addition to the parliamentary estate, Portcullis was built in 2001 to provide more offices for MPs. Located on Embankment, on the other side of Parliament Square from Westminster Palace, it is a seven storey building, adjoined to the estate by an underpass. As the picture below shows, the inside is bright and modern – the centrepiece of the ground floor is a large atrium with a glass roof. Lined with a coffee kiosk, a café called Debate, and a Members' only restaurant called Adjournment, this area is extremely busy with MPs, parliamentary staff and visitors both because people congregate here and because it is a relatively compact area. The first floor of Portcullis, a rectangular shape, provides a circumference view through glass of the atrium. Committee

²⁰ Information collected from Architecture of the Palace, parliament website. <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/building/Palace/architecture/>. Accessed December 2010.

rooms and smaller meeting rooms – used for select and public bill committees, all party group meetings and public events hosted by Members – dominate this floor (see Figures 4-5).²¹

The modern design of the *Scottish Parliament* offers an even starker contrast to the Palace. Built in 2004 from a structure of wood, steel and concrete, the Scottish Parliament is an architecturally innovative design by Catalan architect, Enric Miralles. Upon entering the building and passing through security, visitors arrive at the Main Hall. It holds a row of information desks, space for exhibitions, a visitors' café and shop, and the parliamentary crèche. The Garden Lobby, distinctively decorated with twelve leaf-shaped windows on the ceiling, forms the centre of the pass-holders' area of the parliament. A bright space and generally bustling with activity, it offers a coffee kiosk, café and large seating area, and leads the way on one side to MSP offices and the debating chamber on the other. Pictured below, the debating chamber is a spacious room decorated mainly in oak and sycamore and is arranged in a semi-circular layout (see Figures 6-8).²² Miralles' concern with ergonomics and with symbolism is evident in every quarter of the building – from the curved shape of the reception desks representing the 'ebb and flow' of the public coming into parliament, the meeting rooms exposed by glass walls and the contemplative 'window seats' in each MSP office.²³ Indeed, the Building User Brief for the Scottish Parliament makes explicit the presumption that buildings are an important symbol that impact upon public perceptions: 'it must be secure but accessible to all'.²⁴

²¹ Information collected from Background to Portcullis House, Parliament website. <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/building/other-buildings/portcullishouse/background/>. Accessed December 2010.

²² Information collected from Parliamentary Buildings, Scottish Parliament website. <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/vli/holyrood/building/index.htm>. Accessed December 2010.

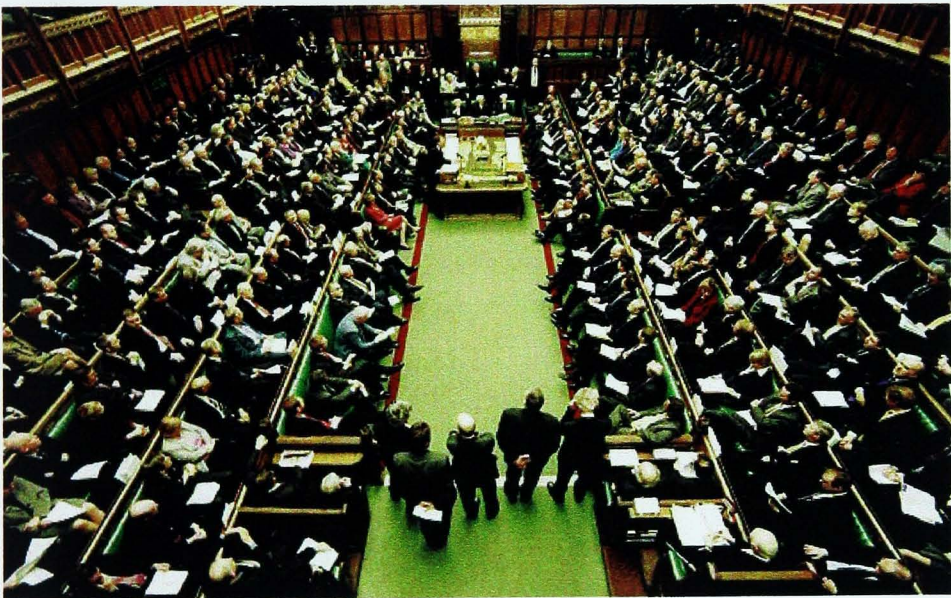
²³ Official Parliamentary Tour, taken twice in May 2009 and again in May 2010.

²⁴ Point 1.4, Scottish Parliament Building User Brief, 1998.

Figure 1: Westminster Palace



Figure 2: Westminster Chamber



Westminster Floor Plan (first

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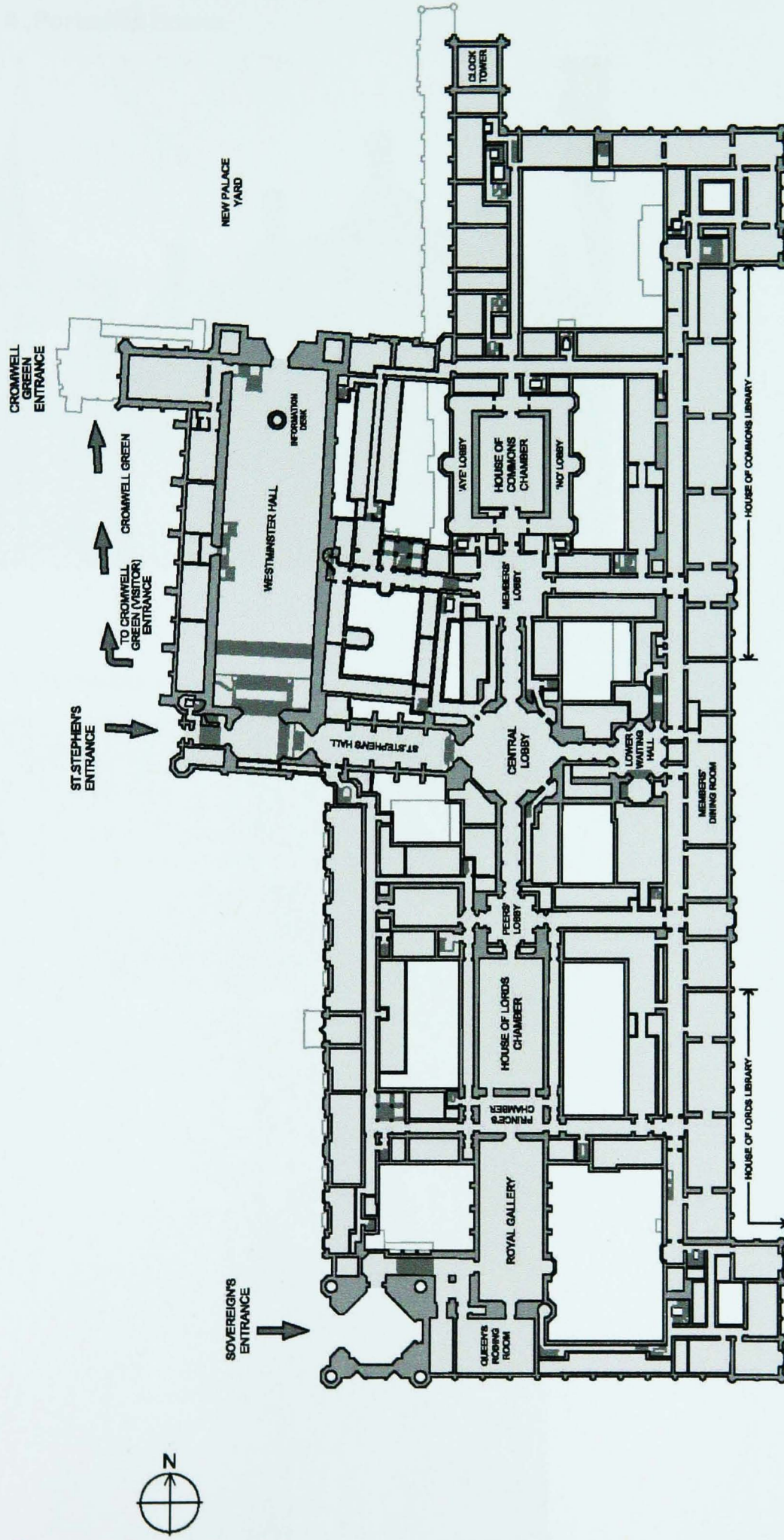


Figure 4: Portcullis House



Figure 5: Portcullis atrium



Figure 6: Scottish Parliament

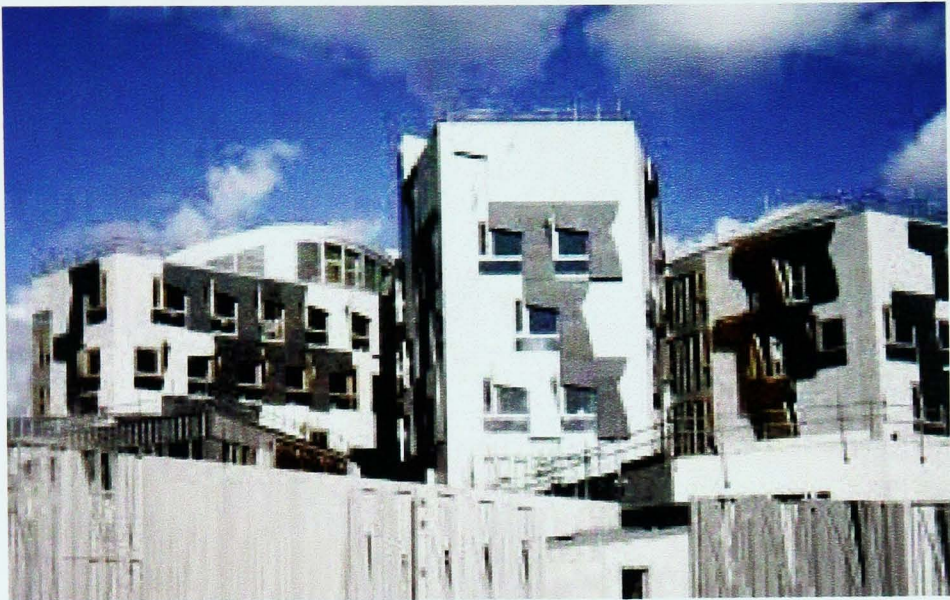


Figure 7: Scottish Parliament Chamber

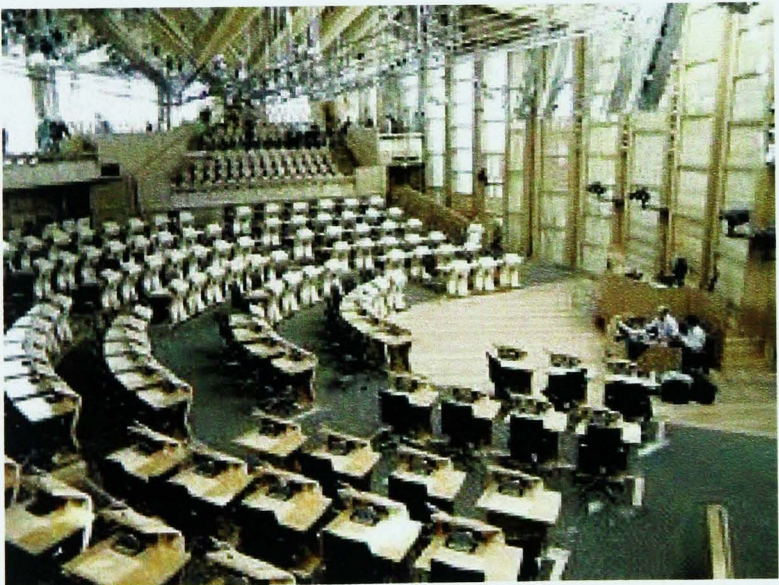
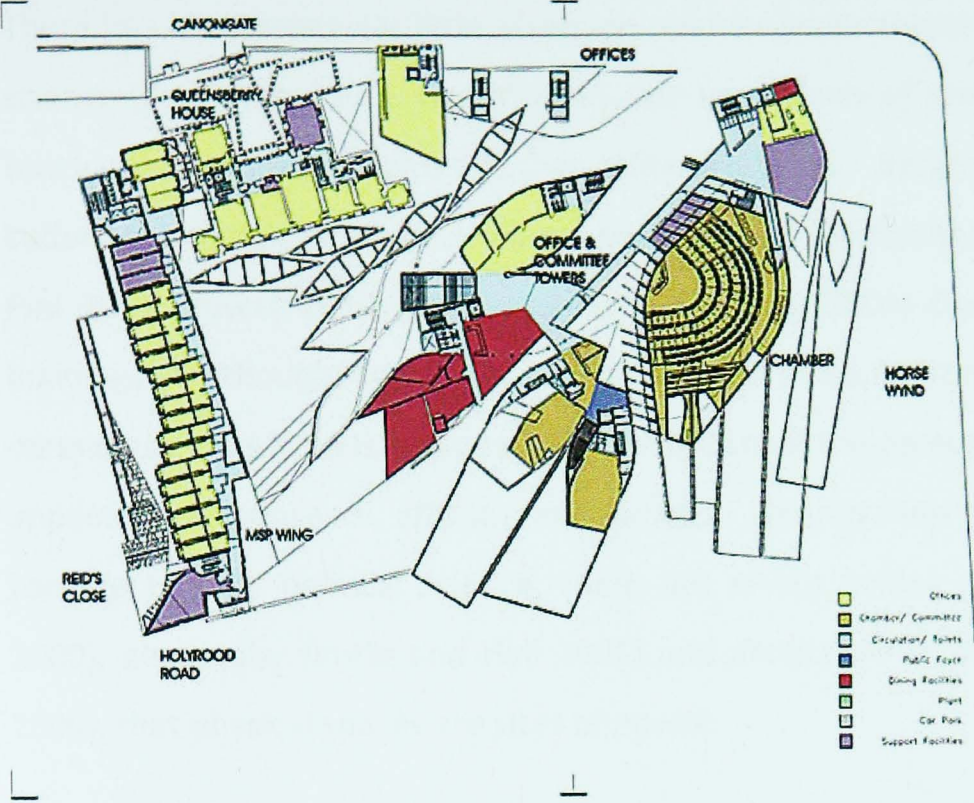


Figure 8: Scottish Parliament Floor Plan



Parliamentary Buildings in Political Science

There has been relatively little attention paid to parliamentary buildings in political science (Parkinson 2006). Nonetheless, the small body of literature within political science that does exist contends that political buildings are an artefact of its political culture and indicative of the story the parliament is telling about itself (Crawford and Pini 2011; Puwar 2010; Parkinson 2009; Edwards 2004; Goodsell 1988). Political buildings are thought to matter for perceptions of parliament – in communicating messages about ‘who is recognised as being part of the demos and who is not’, they impact upon sense of efficacy and political participation (Parkinson 2009: 10). Looking beyond political science, there are claims across anthropology (Ardener 2000), geography (Imrie and Hall 2001) and architecture (Weisman 1992; Rendell 2000), that physical spaces are sites of power.

Two claims made in the literature about the importance of political space have the potential to offer another strand to feminist institutionalist approaches (Driscoll and Krook 2009; Waylen 2009; Mackay et al 2009; Kulawik 2009; Kenny and Mackay 2009). First, institutional norms are visible from the architecture and interior. Political buildings reveal ‘cultural assumptions’ in the parliamentary culture, which are likely to reflect the preferences of historically dominant groups involved in their formation (Duerst-Lahti 2002: 385). Such an environment may make dominant groups feel at ease, while reminding others of their marginalised status (Puwar 2004; Crawford and Pini 2011). Second, buildings are part of the process through which institutional norms condition behaviour – norms visible from parliamentary buildings and the spaces within them act as ‘cues’ by regularising members to institutionally appropriate behaviour (Goodsell 1988: 297). In this way, physical manifestation of (gendered) institutional norms may have an impact on the feeling of belonging amongst elected representatives and may be exclusionary to historically under-represented groups (Parkinson 2009). Moreover, the physical embodiment of institutional norms may contribute to the process by which newcomers are socialised to institutional norms.

This chapter examines these two claims and considers the usefulness of literature on political space as an analytical framework for study of parliament. It conceives of parliamentary buildings and the spaces within them as physical embodiments of gendered institutional norms. It finds that, although a singular focus on symbolic aspects of Westminster and the Scottish Parliament, such as their buildings, risks overstating the differences between them, and that, moreover, a deterministic relationship between political space and behaviour cannot be established, examining parliamentary buildings is a useful way to understand parliamentary culture. As the opening vignettes to this chapter indicate, participant observation data, collected while 'shadowing' eight MPs and MSPs, suggests that (certainly from my own perspective as a PhD researcher), buildings affect the atmosphere of the institution, in subtle, but important ways.²⁵ Interviews with MPs and MSPs, conducted after and informed by the shadowing placements, provide support for these initial observations and reflections. Attitudes amongst MPs and MSPs towards their buildings shed new light on their wider views of parliamentary culture and provide insight into how inclusive the culture is experienced on an everyday and mundane way by its representatives. The different styles of the Palace and Portcullis House within the Westminster parliamentary estate offer an additional comparison to that with the Scottish Parliament.

Cultural assumptions communicated to representatives by the more historical areas of Westminster Palace look to be part of the process through which some Members feel included in parliament, while others are reminded of their marginalised status, primarily in terms of gender and class, but also race and professional background (Puwar 2004). Portcullis House, in contrast, is generally regarded as a necessary and successful working environment, though there is some, generally light-hearted, contempt for its design. In the Scottish Parliament, attitudes towards the parliamentary building are much less contested – MSPs are mostly positive about their political building, arguing it represents founding commitments to accessibility and public participation. This suggests that the (gendered) institutional norms said to

²⁵ See Chapter 2 for more detail of shadowing placements.

be embodied in some parliamentary buildings are experienced as more inclusive in the Scottish Parliament. Using political space as an analytical lens therefore captures subtle, and difficult to measure, ways in which institutions are lived by their representatives; thought to be necessary for understanding the context in which the substantive representation of women occurs (Mackay 2008).

The Westminster Parliamentary Estate

Attitudes amongst MPs towards Westminster Palace provide insight into contested claims regarding the nature of institutional norms. The findings support the contention that buildings are physical embodiments of institutional norms, and masculine norms in particular, which reflect the historical and current under-representation of women (amongst others) in political institutions, and appear to privilege some groups above others. The affection felt by some MPs compared with the sense of exclusion experienced by others would seem to suggest that Westminster parliamentary culture differentially affects MPs’ feelings of belonging and alienation. While for some MPs the Palace represents history and continuity, for others the building represents social exclusivity. A typology of *traditionalists*, *critics* and *minimisers* emerges from attitudes towards the Palace. As can be seen from Table 3.1, party is the starkest pattern in attitudes. It is primarily Tories who express affection for the older parts of the parliamentary estate, and only Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs who are critical. Minimisers form a plurality of interview respondents – a greater number of MPs are ambivalent or mixed in their views of the buildings than are strongly traditionalist or critical.

Table 3.1 Typology of MPs’ Views of the Palace:

	Traditionalists	Minimisers	Critics
Labour	3 (30%)	9 (60%)	8 (73%)
Conservative	7 (70%)	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
Lib Dem	0 (0%)	4 (27%)	3 (27%)

TOTAL	10 (28%)	15 (42%)	11 (30%)
MPs identified as active on women's issues and matched sample (sex differences).			
	4x identified (4x women)	9x identified (7x women)	7x identified (7x women)
	6x matched (6x men)	6x matched (8x men)	4x matched (4x men)

Traditionalists: ‘it’s like home’

Traditionalists express strong affection for the building of Westminster Palace and appear to feel both impressed by, but also at ease in, their surroundings. Party is a notable pattern amongst this group: seven of the ten traditionalists are Conservatives, three are Labour and none are Liberal Democrat. The number of MPs identified as active on women’s issues are nearly evenly balanced with those matched – four compared to six. All of the traditionalists express enthusiastic preference for ‘the older bits within the Palace’, which it is agreed, provide ‘a sense continuity and history’.²⁶ For these MPs, the buildings go beyond basic functionality – they are physical symbols of democracy and remind Members of the weight of their role. For instance, one describes how the place that gives him the biggest thrill is the 900-year-old Westminster Hall, ‘sometimes when you leave here at half 11, you get a *real* sense of history and the importance of the place... I do think the style of the building here gives you a sense of history and continuity, because while some of the ceremonial things in themselves might not be important – freedom of speech, the right to elected representatives – some of the major changes in history are represented in the bricks and mortar of this place. If you ask me, would it better if we moved into a Portcullis type building, or a Scottish Parliament, then my answer would be no.’²⁷ Another thinks the buildings are important for public perceptions – they are ‘visual representations’ of democracy and fulfil ‘a useful function in showing the people what a parliament is’.²⁸

²⁶ Interview 7 (05/07/10)

²⁷ Interview 13 (19/01/10)

²⁸ Interview 17 (20/07/10)

All traditionalists who discuss the physical layout of the chamber are positive that the oppositional seating arrangements represent the adversarial nature of British politics. For instance, a Conservative man argues, 'It's often said, and we try to do it here in Westminster Hall, that if instead of having MPs facing each other and had a horseshoe then we'd somehow we'd end up being nice to each other! Complete nonsense and a complete waste of time! We sit on opposite sides and it's important we should do – it's important that the Opposition sit there and oppose the government.'²⁹ A Labour male Scottish MP remarks in reference to Holyrood, 'I dislike these new fangled – god I'm such a traditionalist, I really am – semi-circle debating chambers... If I'd wanted to join an accounting group and hug everybody then I'd have done that, but I wanted to be a politician and I think politics should be about dividing lines, and principle and argument and sometimes the argument should be ferocious.'³⁰ Similarly, an MP, who was previously an MSP, expresses a preference for Westminster's 'cosier' chamber above the 'stilted' atmosphere he perceives in the Scottish Parliament. He is dismissive of the idea that the semi-circular seating arrangement would and should foster more consensual politics:

You hear everything in the chamber, it's not stilted, it has more atmosphere. Is it more childish? Not really, the Scottish Parliament got childish pretty quickly. The idea that if you all sit in a horseshoe it will be marvellous is wrong. My view is the Scottish left wing academia, the Alice Browns, who were all part of the great devolution settlement and said it was all going to be different – well Alice Brown, the last turnout was 51% so could you tell me how the Scottish parliament has engaged more people, has brought people closer to politics? I thought adversarial politics turned people off so you went into a horseshoe shape, they keep telling you it's less adversarial, it was a great love-in but in the end it ignored human nature. Politicians are passionate, we should be – if we are adversarial it's because we believe in things. There

²⁹ Interview 17 (20/07/10)

³⁰ Interview 36 (24/02/10)

are a lot of good things about the Scottish Parliament, but they didn't take out human nature because they got a new building and they sit in horseshoe.³¹

Some traditionalists provide explicit support for the notion that attitudes towards parliamentary buildings are indicative of the feelings of belonging to Parliament experienced by representatives. Those traditionalists asked directly whether they were daunted by the buildings when they were first elected all deny this was the case, many drawing on their professional or educational background to explain why. For instance, a Conservative woman argues that although parliament was mildly 'bewildering' as a newcomer, she thinks she was more at ease than most people because her previous career meant she had spent time in Westminster.³² A Labour man who spent time in Parliament before his election emphasises his immediate appreciation for the buildings, 'the very first time I came down here I remember walking through doors and thinking, "oh my god, I must come and work here". I knew then that I wanted to be an MP. I just fell in love with the place.'³³ His male Labour colleague similarly argues Parliament was not unfamiliar when he was elected in 1997, 'I'd spent hours in the Strangers' Bar, I'd been to meet Tory Ministers in their rooms here'. He links orientation with the buildings with a more general understanding of parliamentary procedures and informal norms of doing politics, 'Even people who've worked in the building for a few years, and who know a lot more than members of the public could hope to, you only really get it if you've been a Member. It took me six years really, of being an MP, of being a backbencher and being a Whip, and then being a backbencher again – I breathed a sigh of relief when I came out of government and thought, "I actually understand this place now, I understand how it works".'³⁴

A Conservative woman MP is emphatic in describing her fondness for the Palace and explicitly articulates feeling at home. According to her own perception, her sense of

³¹ Interview 2 (29/06/10)

³² Interview 20 (04/03/10)

³³ Interview 36 (24/02/10)

³⁴ Interview 13 (19/01/10)

ease in this environment relates to her educational background. Although she is awed everyday she walks 'through the doors', she compares her affection for Parliament to the house she was born in, 'I wouldn't change this [the Palace] for anything, because I love this place. I love it in the same way I loved the house I was born in and brought up by my parents. It's like home. That's my own personal feeling.' Asked directly, she claims not to have felt intimidated when she first arrived, and puts it down to her familiarity with such institutions because of her university which had similar 'gothic structure' and even 'the same wood carving' in its interior.³⁵ A Labour woman similarly stresses her ease in the parliamentary environment. She remembers how special her arrival to parliament felt in 1997, especially as one of a minority of women, and recalls feeling at home the first time she visited on a school trip, 'I wanted to see the place. We brought a teacher with us for show, but the kids organised the trip – I wrote to my local MP. We went through the chamber on the tour and I thought to myself, 'yes, I could see myself in here'. I'd always wanted to be an MP, I felt at home *then*! When I got elected – obviously there hadn't been many women here, so one feels the weight of how special a thing it is. And I still feel that to this day, you don't become blasé about that.'³⁶

While some traditionalists welcome Portcullis House as a functional addition to parliamentary facilities, none are complimentary about its architectural design. A Conservative woman comments, 'I think the Palace is lovely, it's one of the privileges of being an MP to be able to work in a Grade 1 listed building that is so glorious. Purpose built, but still very glorious. Equally, although I think Portcullis is a monstrosity from the outside – one of the most iconic squares in the world and we put that bloody carbuncle there, what can you expect, it was designed by a committee – but inside it works very well.'³⁷ Her male Conservative colleague thinks that the atrium area of Portcullis, the large open communal space that forms the centrepiece of the building, works very well as a meeting area, but is mildly contemptuous of the interior, 'it's ok, it's all a bit 'no doorknobs' minimalist New

³⁵ Interview 9 (14/01/10)

³⁶ Interview 24 (26/01/10)

³⁷ Interview 20 (04/03/10)

Labour for my taste! [laughs]’.³⁸ A female Conservative MP is more critical, ‘I hate this building – I hate it because it’s noisy, and in the winter it’s freezing – it’s been deserted on most of the snowy days because it was too cold to sit here without being wrapped up. It’s not conducive to having meetings – it’s like being outdoors. I don’t like the modern offices – they don’t feel like Parliament – there’s no sense of history or belonging. And so I much prefer the Palace.’ She asserts that after the 2010 election she will request an office in the Palace and refers to a ‘huge pecking order’ in the allocation of offices.³⁹

*Critics: ‘An old gentlemen’s club stuck in the past’*⁴⁰

The attitudes of traditionalists contrast strongly with MPs who are critical of parliamentary buildings because they perceive them to symbolise social exclusivity primarily in terms of class and gender, and also race and professional background. Although talking generally about the buildings, criticism made on these grounds is directed at the Palace rather than Portcullis House, which many explicitly express a preference for. While not all critics dislike the Palace, many argue it is evocative of a stuffy parliamentary culture and some express feelings of exclusion, particularly experienced as newcomers, in this environment. In total, 11 MPs variously argue the appearance of the Palace is reminiscent of an elite gentlemen’s club or public school with which they do not identify. Similarly to traditionalists, party is the most obvious pattern amongst critics: eight are Labour and three are Liberal Democrats. None of the interviewed Conservative MPs are critical of the Palace or claim to experience feelings of exclusion. The small number of critics makes obvious sex differences difficult to ascertain, however slightly more MPs identified as active on women’s issues criticise the social norms represented by the Palace – seven compared to four matched MPs.

A Labour woman elected in 1997, identified as active on women’s issues, spontaneously identifies the buildings as an aspect of Parliament she enjoys, ‘I love

³⁸ Interview 14 (16/03/10)

³⁹ Interview 27 (24/01/10)

⁴⁰ Interview 18 (03/02/10)

history, there's something about the place that tells us how our history has evolved – we are in a historic building'. However, she describes feeling intimidated by her surroundings as a newcomer and conveys a sense in which she felt she was somehow trespassing on forbidden ground. Class plays out in her view that her educational background made the physical environment of Parliament less familiar than if she had attended a more exclusive school:

You know when you're a child and you start school and everything seems much bigger than you. And you think, 'how am I ever going to find my way around this place?' I didn't know where I was allowed to go, how to deal with the attendants and this sort of thing. I think some Members of the House are more used to that environment than others, because of their backgrounds – if they went to public school or if they'd been to Oxford. But I think for some of us who had a more 'run of the mill' school experience, a good one, but more conventional – in a 1960s building – it's a bit different!⁴¹

Her colleague, a black Labour woman MP, talks about her marginality from Parliament in terms of both her sex and race, and spontaneously recalls being struck by the buildings when she was first elected, 'the thing that struck me as someone coming in for the first time was a very powerful sense that here you were at the heart of the empire. As a black person, the thing that struck me was the architecture, the ritual was all about when Britain was an empire. So it was like you were being juxtaposed with this living stone monument empire which is what the House of Commons is. That's why the main House of Commons is so grandiose, because it was built at a time when Britain had an empire in which the sun didn't set. And as somebody whose parents came from empire you were very aware of that.' She argues furthermore, that the buildings are forbidding to all, but particularly under-represented groups, and for this reason she makes an effort to invite people from her deprived constituency into Parliament to encourage a greater sense of

⁴¹ Interview 4 (04/02/10)

entitlement, 'People, anyone that hasn't been here before – white or black, feel uncomfortable. But very often marginalised groups feel particularly uncomfortable because they don't really identify with the institution... I'm very keen on doing things with the community that involves bringing them because it's their Parliament too and I want them to see it.'⁴²

A Labour woman MP likes the Palace, but is critical of the facilities and evaluates the offices in terms of their efficiency for quickly racing home for 'supper and homework with the children' before rushing back for the vote, describing it as, 'the only way I was going to see the kids!'.⁴³ Another Labour woman offers an explicitly gendered critique of parliamentary buildings in describing the stone floors (said to be painful for women wearing shoes with thin soles), the toilets and the food, though she discusses ways in which the buildings have improved since she was elected in 1997 'in the old days, a door that said 'Members Only' actually meant 'Men's Lavatory' – most of the time, about 80 per cent of the time. The food in the building used to be the type of food that men like – meat, two veg – stodgy, and we now have more salads – I don't want to be completely gendered about food, but I do think men and women like different kinds of food.' She also wonders whether the 'Hogwartsy' character of the buildings constitutes and gives permission for the 'stupid ancient traditions', 'the ridiculous hours' and adversarial behaviour in the chamber:

One of the things about political discourse, particularly in a British culture, is that it's liable to get rowdy. It's particularly liable to get rowdy if you don't have a desk – I know this seems bonkers, but the thing about the chamber is there's no desk – you're not working, you're a rabble. Physically, it's not like most workplaces. Physically, you're designed to have a standoff against the opposition [thumps table while making point]. The way the building is designed encourages shouting and things like that.⁴⁴

⁴² Interview 8 (12/01/10)

⁴³ Interview 29 (06/01/10)

⁴⁴ Interview 12 (26/01/10)

Yet another Labour woman argues that, given the choice, 'I would take out the division walls and I'd have a semi-circular chamber – I don't like the confrontational chamber and a lot of women don't – but it's more the fact you don't have a seat! There isn't a chamber in the Western world where you don't have a seat.' She prefers the newer buildings in the parliamentary estate and explains that she always tries to book one of the 'user-friendly' committee rooms in Portcullis rather than the Palace when hosting an event because she thinks they encourage better interaction, 'the rooms in the Palace are much more formal, the chairs can't be rearranged, it's all fixed – they're like churches, again it's confrontational – people on this side, people on that side, and a top table which is four feet above everybody else. If you have a serious meeting, particularly when people have come from outside the building, you're very remote to them, and it doesn't work! I suppose it worked in Victorian times when you had the hierarchical structures, but it's different now, so meetings in here are much better.' Similarly to the Conservative traditionalist who referred to the 'pecking order' in offices, this MP explains, 'it's the whips who hand out the offices' and because she is a frequent rebel she did not expect to be allocated one of the better rooms, 'I requested a double room in Portcullis because I needed the space for the group – I didn't think they'd give it to me but they did.'⁴⁵

Women from other parties share the perception of parliamentary buildings as representing a particular type of exclusive club. A Liberal Democrat woman compares the 'glass, light wood and stone' that represent the openness of Holyrood to the 'dark wood, plush carpets, corridors without windows' that make Westminster resemble 'an old gentlemen's club stuck in the past'.⁴⁶ Her colleague, another Liberal Democrat, thinks that the architectural style may have a subtle impact on appropriate behaviour by claiming that 'old politics' is perpetuated in the Palace whereas Portcullis encourages 'new politics' which is more consensual. She provides strong support for the argument that the physical environment contributes to members' socialisation to Parliament by affecting how they perceive their options

⁴⁵ Interview 5 (18/01/10)

⁴⁶ Interview 18 (03/02/10)

for action, 'you have very different conversations in Portcullis – they feel different, things feel more possible. The hand of history is not on your shoulder in Portcullis whereas it drags you down in the Palace. I try to ignore that – one of my focuses is to not be like that, but as I say, I fall into the language more than I like to admit.'⁴⁷

It is not only MPs who are identified as active on women's issues, and so might be expected to have greater gender consciousness, who describe ways in which parliamentary buildings are evocative of an exclusive culture with which they do not identify. The perceptions of male MPs, who are not publicly known for their interest in women's issues, reveal that gender and class play out in a similar way than for those who are. A Labour MP spontaneously raises the buildings to describe the exclusive culture, 'the first thing that strikes lots of people when they come to Parliament is that it rather resembles a gentlemen's club, in its architecture, atmosphere, and very low quality food. That obviously is an environment more commonly frequented by conservatives with a small 'c' and wouldn't have much appeal to other people. It's similar to a boarding school in terms of the male clubbable atmosphere. I mean, it's got significantly better, but I think it's something that still surprises people when they first arrive here.'⁴⁸ He also provides support for the argument that the seating arrangements inside the chamber encourage adversarial behaviour:

The chamber, in its very layout, tends to encourage and accentuate confrontational politics and exchange. The fact people face each other... the fact it's very small and intimate, the fact the noise reverberates around it... I think that does make difficult for quietly spoken, considered and consensual politics. That doesn't mean to say there aren't quietly spoken and consensual speeches made and certain Members are listened to anyway because of their status built up over years, but it does make it more difficult for people to make their mark

⁴⁷ Interview 23 (11/01/10)

⁴⁸ Interview 37 (27/07/10)

unless they're prepared to compromise with the rumbustious, yah-boo culture that dominates the place.⁴⁹

His Labour colleague thinks that the buildings reinforce the traditional hierarchy in relationships within Parliament, 'the layout, design and the mock gothic building is saying to people "you should know your place." It's a Palace and was functionally designed for another age, it just doesn't really do the job now... It is all little hidden corridors and 1001 rules – who is allowed to walk down this corridor, who is allowed to eat in this dining room? Like all mysteries it's down to controlling behaviour.' He provides further support for the argument that the physical surroundings are part of socialisation to Parliament by insulating representatives from priorities outside Westminster, 'I found it, not so much daunting, as so far removed from everyday life that it almost says, "right, you've arrived somewhere now and you've got to change your behaviour, you've living a different type of life". When in fact you should be doing the opposite of that – you should bringing your constituency here with you.'⁵⁰

Another Labour MP provides support for the argument that educational background mediates one's experience of Parliament. Asked whether the buildings are intimidating, he responds, 'I think so, of course it helps if you have worked in, or legislated in, buildings of a similar character. I got, what used to be called assisted places, to a public school so I was familiar with what this place looked like – it was remarkably similar.'⁵¹ A male Liberal Democrat finds the 'gentlemen club' atmosphere off-putting and is puzzled by colleagues' fondness for the buildings and the club he perceives they represent. Talking about behaviour in the chamber, he comments, 'I think for many people, not just women but perhaps more so women, the macho environment in there is quite unattractive.' He continues by explicitly claiming to feel excluded from what he perceives as the dominant culture, 'It's actually deeply unattractive to me – I've never felt part of the club here in the way that some just love it and will devote their lives to it, like this bizarre thing of people

⁴⁹ Interview 37 (27/07/10)

⁵⁰ Interview 1 (22/06/10)

⁵¹ Interview 3 (27/01/10)

choosing to get married here in this bloody chapel underground. Why get married in the place you work?! It's just bizarre to me – but they just soak up the whole thing.’⁵²

*Minimisers: ‘Buildings are buildings. They’re places where we work’*⁵³

The greatest singular group of MPs can be described as minimisers in relation to their perceptions of parliamentary buildings. Minimisers are more or less ambivalent about the buildings. They are distinct in not having strong preferences for either the Palace or Portcullis and in not perceiving and, or criticising social assumptions in the buildings in terms of gender (or class). Some of these MPs explicitly deny caring about the buildings while the ambivalence of others is evident from their tone and the little they have to say on the issue. Others are less dismissive of the topic, articulating either mixed views or mild criticism of the buildings, however they are critical, for instance in terms of functionality, rather than because of cultural assumptions contained in the buildings. In total, 15 MPs are categorised as minimisers. They are made up of MPs from all parties: seven Labour, four Liberal Democrat and three Conservative MPs. It includes a majority of MPs identified as active on women’s issues: nine, compared with four matched MPs (though seven women and five men), showing that while many critics perceive gender, class, race and professional assumptions in the parliamentary buildings, many of their fellow MPs identified as active on women’s issues do not.

Illustrative of MPs who are ambivalent on the topic of parliamentary buildings are their short responses to questions about which they prefer. Two MPs blankly reply, ‘buildings are buildings. They’re places where we work’⁵⁴ and, ‘I’m interested in policies, not buildings’. This MP, a Liberal Democrat, explains that he has, ‘never spent much time learning about the history of the place as some others do, because I have other issues to deal with and it’s not my priority to luxuriate in the surroundings.’⁵⁵ A Conservative man responds, ‘I don’t spend much time looking out the window. At one stage I shared an office with five other MPs... At one stage I had

⁵² Interview 28 (23/06/10)
⁵³ Interview 26 (28/01/10)
⁵⁴ Interview 26 (28/01/10)
⁵⁵ Interview 11 (30/01/10)

one with no window at all... The simple answer is that I'm happy wherever I am.' This MP claims he was not daunted by the buildings as a newcomer and, without being asked, links it to his educational background, 'I'm used to buildings and people so that wasn't a problem. I wasn't important when I was elected, but nor was I anonymous. I had the fortune of being at university at a place that's been around 400 years old or more. One of the schools I went to was a similar kind of thing. When I was younger I changed educational establishment about ten times so going to something new wasn't something new. Change wasn't strange to me. The buildings old or young aren't strange.'⁵⁶

Some other MPs explicitly deny the relevancy of parliamentary buildings for behaviour. For instance, in response to the contention that Portcullis House brought a more informal culture, a Labour man elected in 1997, argues that there were more important dynamics, 'I think the 1997 MPs were less formal. I also think society has become less formal. You have that 'call me Tony' era'.⁵⁷ A Labour woman MP, asked in response to her stated preference for Portcullis committee rooms whether they create a different atmosphere, argues, 'no, I think the tone of committees is far more set by the Chair and the Members rather than the room that it's in. But my preference is to be in Portcullis just because the rooms are airier and lighter and you can hear better.' This MP describes her early experiences of the parliamentary buildings as an 'exciting' opportunity to explore rather than daunting.⁵⁸

Some of the MPs categorised as minimisers might fit in the traditionalist or critics category in that they see the benefits of both the Palace and Portcullis, but do not express either sentiment very strongly. For instance, a Conservative woman corresponds with traditionalists in that she likes the old parliamentary buildings, but is similar to critics in that she approves of Portcullis which she thinks has, 'brought a different atmosphere here to Westminster – a much more informal atmosphere which I think is good.' Asked why a more informal atmosphere is good, she responds,

⁵⁶ Interview 31 (06/01/10)

⁵⁷ Interview 26 (28/01/10)

⁵⁸ Interview 25 (03/02/10)

‘I think it’s helped break down the ‘club’ atmosphere that did exist.’⁵⁹ Similarly, asked which buildings he prefers, a Labour man responds, ‘I like Portcullis and I like the Palace. In my average working day, I’d much rather be based in this environment [Portcullis] than across the road [Palace] – it’s much brighter, it’s built for purpose. However, for the bit of the job that’s about debating and all the rest, I do like going to the older setting with the tradition – I like that if I’m honest.’⁶⁰

Some are critical of the buildings, but only in terms of their functionality, rather than because they perceive them to represent particular cultural characteristics. For instance, one talks about her preference of office in terms of ‘logistics’,⁶¹ while another recalls the inconvenience of her office and the inadequacy of facilities when she was first elected, ‘I was in a grotty office in Millbank which took the full eight minutes to get from there to the chamber to vote – mind you, it kept the weight off! So I didn’t like that very much. Portcullis wasn’t open when I was first here. It was very strange because you had a meeting with somebody and I didn’t want people to trek out to Millbank so you’d come here and find some grotty corner to sit in.’⁶² A Labour MP, known to be active on women’s issues, ‘generally’ likes the buildings, however she is critical of the wasted opportunity to include a crèche in Portcullis and describes the campaign for it as ‘going through treacle’. This MP describes feeling hugely intimidated when she was first elected to Parliament in 1997; however she directs the discussion away from the buildings to the poor induction procedures and trying to manage family life in explaining this, indicating that, at least according to her own perception, the physical surroundings were not primary in mediating her early experiences of Parliament.⁶³

Other MPs similarly raise issues regarding the buildings that they perceive as more important than the questions asked in the interviews about their views of the buildings. Many MPs (from all parties) spontaneously raise the patronage of whips in

⁵⁹ Interview 34 (28/01/10)

⁶⁰ Interview 15 (19/03/10)

⁶¹ Interview 22 (18/01/10)

⁶² Interview 32 (21/01/10)

⁶³ Interview 21 (03/02/10)

allocating offices in their discussions of parliamentary buildings. Some speak critically, though their criticism is not of the parliamentary buildings per se, but of the way in which offices are used by party whips as a resource to exert control and punish troublemakers. For instance, asked whether she prefers the Palace or Portcullis a Labour MP responds, 'well more important, again it was a product of my having this disagreement with the government about arresting people with no evidence, because I'd fallen out with them I was kept in a cupboard! We had this room, it was just mad, I didn't have a chair, and I remember thinking, should I just employ small people so we can all fit in the office?! It was ridiculous. So for years and years we were in this ridiculously small office.'⁶⁴ A Liberal Democrat MP emphasises the importance of buildings as an indicator of hierarchy in explaining how due to the 'pecking order', he shares a small office in the Palace, 'I wouldn't get in here [Portcullis]! I would get the furthest flung outpost, as a new boy, or the very small office and I pushed to get the very small office.'⁶⁵ A Labour male MP likewise describes how offices are currency:

The offices themselves become sites of contested political terrain – whether you get a bigger room depends on whether you play the political game or not. It sounds trite but it's true. Those who have offices in here or the bigger ones over there are those people who play the game, so the furthest away are the ones who don't. So my office is the furthest away and has been since I got here! [laughter] It's meaningless, but that is the currency through which it works – promotion, patronage, size of office, days off, who works latest – that is the currency and the terrible thing is that it works.⁶⁶

The Scottish Parliament: 'a modern Parliament'⁶⁷

Attitudes towards the Scottish Parliamentary building are striking in their homogeneity – MSPs are resoundingly positive about the norms their political

⁶⁴ Interview 10 (12/01/10)

⁶⁵ Interview 30 (22/02/10)

⁶⁶ Interview 19 (22/06/10)

⁶⁷ Interview 54 (03/06/10)

building represents, consistently using terms such as ‘inclusion’ and ‘participation’ when discussing it.⁶⁸ This language reflects the founding aspirations of the designers of the Parliament – based on sharing power between government and Parliament and with the Scottish people, accountability, accessibility and equality – defined in the Scottish Constitutional Convention.⁶⁹ Almost all MSPs like their parliamentary building – not all like the architectural style, but of the 19 asked, all but two discuss it, and what it is intended to represent enthusiastically. As a result, an equivalent typology of traditionalists, critics and minimisers used to categorise MPs’ responses, does not emerge from attitudes amongst MSPs towards the Scottish Parliament building. While the vast majority of interviewees are positive about what the building is intended to represent, and some make references to ways in which this is thought to constructively reflect behaviour, a significant group of MSPs are adamant that the semi-circular seating layout of the chamber, intended to foster more consensual politics, has not played out as hoped (Brown 2000).

Table 3.2 MSP Responses to General Questions about Views of Parliamentary Building

	Positive	Critical
Labour	8 (42%)	0 (0%)
SNP	6 (31%)	0 (0%)
Lib Dem	3 (16%)	0 (0%)
Conservative	2 (11%)	2 (100%)
Total	19 (90%)	2 (10%)
<i>MSPs identified as active on women’s issues and matched sample (sex differences).</i>		
	9x identified (7x women)	2x identified (2x women)

⁶⁸ Despite what we might expect given the controversy surrounding its construction due to the greater cost and time necessary for its completion than initially estimated. See for example, Peterkin, T. ‘Holyrood Buildings delays and costs will increase’, *The Telegraph*, 18 December 2002.

⁶⁹ Scottish Constitutional Convention, *Scotland’s Parliament, Scotland’s Right*, Cosla, 1995.

	10x matched (12x men)	0x matched (0x men)
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Remarkably similar language is used, particularly amongst those Members elected when power was devolved in 1999, to describe what messages the Scottish Parliament building is intended to convey. An important factor for many of the MSPs interviewed is the perceived accessibility of the building to the public – nine spontaneously call it the ‘people’s Parliament’ or talk about it belonging to the people.⁷⁰ Moreover, many MSPs emphasise the deliberate nature of the symbols contained in the Scottish Parliament building. For instance, a Labour member claims that there was a wilful attempt to construct a building that people across Scotland would identify with:

That is one of the great advantages of being here because you do have that landscape right behind the building and you can see a modest version of the hills of Scotland and I think that’s great. So part of that vision was that everyone across the country should feel they owned it and that it should be accessible and I think that has worked.⁷¹

Many MSPs talk about the number of visitors to the Parliament to justify their claim of accessibility to the public. For instance, one Labour Member comments, ‘it’s very, very, very busy. The school children that come in, I’ve seen three different school classes today.’⁷² Another discusses the aspirations for the Parliament, ‘I guess the founding principles were very much it was the people’s Parliament – it’s about the door being open, less formality and anyone being in here on a Wednesday at lunch time, which you’ve seen yourself, will witness the fact that school kids, bus loads come in. It’s always very busy and that’s the way it is and I think that’s quite comfortable’.⁷³ Another compares the differences in accessibility since the Parliament moved from its temporary premises to its new purpose built building at

⁷⁰ Interviews 50 (02/06/10), 52 (10/06/10), 54 (03/06/10), 53 (13/05/10), 57 (18/05/10), 59 (11/05/10), 62 (03/06/10), 72 (26/05/10), 67 (16/06/10)

⁷¹ Interview 62 (03/06/10)

⁷² Interview 72 (26/05/10)

⁷³ Interview 52 (10/06/10)

Holyrood, 'in the first five years we had an excellent debating chamber in the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall but we didn't have all the other resources like the visitor opportunities and that kind of thing. So the difference between the first five years and the second five years is very striking... in just over five years we've had about half the population of Scotland, the equivalent of 2.5 million people.'⁷⁴

It is not only those Members who were involved in the campaign for devolution who are positive about the parliamentary buildings. Two SNP members elected in 2007 similarly approve, 'it's their building. Whenever I host an event in here I always welcome people to "your Scottish Parliament". It's not mine.'⁷⁵ Another agrees and links this to the 'relaxed manner' he perceives to characterise the atmosphere:

I'll give credit to the people who designed the Scottish Parliament – there was a genuine attempt to make it more accessible and make it more of a people's Parliament – that might sound like nonsense, we've got security everywhere, but it's much more easy – if you can get access through an MSP then you've pretty much got open all areas. Also, it's open to the public a great deal more than Westminster, in a more relaxed manner. I think it's just more modern – the genuine hope was that people would think it wasn't a place that was remote from them, and the design – I think the outside is pure ugly, but I think the inside is lovely – and I think when people come into it they feel proud of the fact this is their Parliament – it's not an MSPs' Parliament – and when they send people here they can expect them to represent them and not some parliamentary democracy, it's a people's Parliament.⁷⁶

Indeed, MSPs from all parties argue their building compares favourably with Westminster. A Labour MSP spontaneously offers the building as an example to justify her claim that the Scottish Parliament is more open than Westminster, 'even

⁷⁴ Interview 62 (03/06/10)

⁷⁵ Interview 53 (13/05/10)

⁷⁶ Interview 50 (02/06/10)

the building itself – it's a shame that we are getting a wee bit more security conscious, I think probably it follows on from the Glasgow Airport incident that we're now putting bollards round and talking about getting a new entrance put in – because the one thing about it has been a people's Parliament, where folk can come into the building. You know, they can mingle around, they can queue up, try to get tickets to get in. And I just think that Westminster's a more daunting prospect from that perspective.'⁷⁷ Another Labour woman MSP again uses the building to illustrate the differences between the Scottish Parliament and Westminster, 'even the architecture of the building is different – it's deliberately not facing each other, it's supposed to be more consensual, the voting system is different.'⁷⁸ A male Liberal Democrat, who previously worked at Westminster, asked about the main differences between the Scottish Parliament and Westminster, offers the buildings as evidence of greater accessibility, 'in order to gain physical access to the Houses of Parliament you have to have an invite from a MP as a constituent, whereas you can pitch up at the door here any day of the week, you go through the security procedures and then gain access to the public areas of the building.'⁷⁹ An SNP man comments, 'I think one teacher put very well – that when you go to Westminster to look around, you are very conscious of the fact that you are very small and it's very big and it's looking down on you a bit and when you go around the Scottish Parliament you feel much more at home'.⁸⁰

A link is frequently drawn between the buildings and, what is perceived as, the informal atmosphere in the Scottish Parliament. For instance, an SNP woman claims the buildings influence how people – representatives, parliamentary staff and visitors alike – interact within the Parliament and argues this reflects the less deferential relations in the Scottish Parliament than she believes to exist at Westminster:

⁷⁷ Interview 54 (03/06/10)

⁷⁸ Interview 66 (24/03/10)

⁷⁹ Interview 56 (01/06/10)

⁸⁰ Interview 57 (18/05/10)

I think the whole atmosphere here with all the kids that are always in the building, all the visitors that are always in the building, everybody mixes with everybody. Very few people go to the Members' restaurant for lunch; we just tend to eat in the canteen with everybody else. There's a different atmosphere, much more approachable. There's less barriers... So the Scottish Parliament not having that and having this really open culture; the building with people coming and going all the time is extremely important for staying engaged and staying in the real world. So that you know as a politician if you're taking something forward it's what people need and not what you think they need.⁸¹

Only a few interviewees are unconvinced by the success of the attempt to create an open and welcoming parliamentary building. For instance, asked directly whether he thinks the Parliament is a 'people's Parliament', a Labour MSP comments, 'I think it is far more accepted than it was – we got off to a dreadful start because of all the controversy about the cost, so I think it's accepted. Whether it's loved, I'm not sure. Some people still don't like the building. I think it's certainly accepted but I'm not sure if I'd go as far as to say it is the people's Parliament yet.'⁸² An SNP woman questions the generally accepted claim that the Scottish Parliament building is not daunting to the public by pointing to the difference in how visitors experience it compared with those who inhabit it frequently:

it's quite an intimidating building still, even though it's new and modern. It's just silly things like it's confusing to get round so you have guests and they permanently feel lost, nobody really feels at home for a while. And yeah, it's quite austere in some ways and impressive in others, so I think if you're coming from the outside it very much feels still quite an intimidating place to be in.⁸³

⁸¹ Interview 53 (13/05/10)

⁸² Interview 64 (02/06/10)

⁸³ Interview 69 (17/05/10)

Contrary to the Westminster findings where Conservative MPs praise the Palace of Westminster, Conservative MSPs are the only ones to express criticism of the Scottish Parliament building – a position that might be expected, given conservative preference for traditional buildings. One remarks, ‘from my perspective the Parliament building is not the happiest of the designs.’ Nonetheless, he accepts that the facilities are good and that there are benefits, ‘it brings the public in, we have school kids coming around in droves and that’s good.’⁸⁴ His two Conservative colleagues, both identified as active on women’s issues, are unequivocally critical and make a different point. They compare the building unfavourably with Westminster and argue it is not conducive to informal socialising between Members, ‘in Westminster you’ve got that fantastic coffee lounge. You can get a scone and mix with people over it and here... well, the refectory downstairs, not a place that would attract you to go and spend time. So, I think there’s a definite lack there.’⁸⁵

Her colleague makes a similar point in discussing the absence of spaces where Members can mingle. While other MSPs commend the egalitarian use of parliamentary facilities such as the canteen, there is a sense that these two would like to see more privileged spaces for MSPs to socialise, ‘very few people use the tea room such as it is as a converted committee room – it’s got no atmosphere. So it all just contributes to it being... It just doesn’t gel as a workplace. And when you go into the garden lobby, I mean it’s, everyone there *except* MSPs. I’m not saying we should commandeer seats, but it’s not an MSP area. And if someone comes to visit you, they have to walk from away over the other end up here to your office. There’s no Members’ lounge or tea room to take them.’⁸⁶

The Semi-Circular Chamber

While the vast majority of MSPs speak positively about the parliamentary building generally, there is scepticism that a semi-circular seating layout fosters consensual debate, questioning the extent to which behaviour necessarily follows from or

⁸⁴ Interview 70 (27/05/10)

⁸⁵ Interview 65 (01/06/10)

⁸⁶ Interview 67 (16/06/10)

reflects symbols or norms contained in physical structures. While four MSPs can be described as *advocates* in their claim that consensual relations are reflected in the physical layout of the chamber, a greater number of interviewees, eight in total, who can be understood as *sceptical* of the founding aspirations, are adamant the physical layout of the chamber has not been successful in fostering consensual behaviour.

Table 3.3 MSPs Views of whether Chamber Layout Reflects Founding Aspirations

	Advocates	Sceptics
Labour	2 (50%)	2 (25%)
SNP	0 (0%)	4 (50%)
Lib Dems	1 (25%)	1 (12.5%)
Conservatives	1 (25%)	1 (12.5%)
TOTAL	4 (33%)	8 (67%)
<i>MSPs identified as active on women’s issues and matched sample (sex differences).</i>		
	2x identified (2x women)	5x identified (6x women)
	2x matched (2x men)	3x matched (4x men)

Only one MSP supports the notion that the seating layout of the chamber contributes to a more consensual style of behaviour, ‘the architects of this Parliament and the designers of the Parliament in the political sense wanted a more inclusive and a more European kind of style of politics which is what we’ve got.’⁸⁷ Her colleague initially presents a similar argument, ‘I think the chamber was designed deliberately in that shape and it was to try and soften the tone of debates, because when you’re swords length at Westminster, you’re facing somebody, they’re there, you’re shouting at them – it’s in a “let’s do battle” set up with the

⁸⁷ Interview 68 (08/06/10)

goodies and the baddies, and “let’s all run at each other”. So I think that it was deliberately done that way, to just try and soften the debate and to have less confrontation’. However she is, when probed, less confident it has worked, ‘Well, not particularly, well maybe it has. I still think we manage to be confrontational though and they manage to get the theatre of that.’⁸⁸

A greater number of MSPs are sceptical the founding aspiration of consensual politics, symbolised in the horseshoe seating arrangements, play out in interaction in the chamber. Asked directly, a Conservative woman responds, ‘I don’t think so. I don’t think it matters at all. You only have to listen to First Minister’s questions to realise that that’s the case.’⁸⁹ An SNP man spontaneously raises the architecture in the chamber to illustrate the failure of a ‘different style’ of politics in the Scottish Parliament, ‘I think you can create a chamber of any shape you like, but people score fairly strong political points against each other, they still put them quite forcefully.’⁹⁰

Asked whether debate in Holyrood is less adversarial than Westminster, a Liberal Democrat MSP responds in the negative and rejects the idea the shape of the chamber affects interaction within it:

Have you watched First Minister’s questions? You can draw your own conclusions. I mean you’ll know the history of the chamber at Westminster, the benches at Westminster are opposite facing and they are deliberately the distance they are apart because it is effectively two sword lengths. Most modern debating chambers within parliaments, if not quite semi-circular, are to some extent not facing. Does it work? No, not really. I mean First Minister’s questions, like Prime Minister’s questions, is a piece of theatre, that’s all it is and it hasn’t curtailed the most stupid aspects of what is supposed to be intelligent debate from taking place.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Interview 54 (03/06/10)

⁸⁹ Interview 65 (01/06/10)

⁹⁰ Interview 51 (03/06/10)

⁹¹ Interview 56 (01/06/10)

Another is incredulous of such a notion, 'I think it's ludicrous to believe, by virtue of the shape of the Scottish Parliament chamber being that way rather than two rows of people opposing each other, that is going to change the style of political discourse. Why would it?'⁹²

Discussion

The findings from both case-studies provide support for the argument that political space reflects gendered institutional norms. At Westminster, attitudes amongst MPs indicate that parliamentary buildings are a physical embodiment of gendered institutional norms which look to impact upon the feelings of inclusion and exclusion experienced by some representatives. However, the attitudes of minimisers suggest that the importance of parliamentary buildings should not be exaggerated – MPs who claim, or appear to be ambivalent about, parliamentary buildings constitute the largest category of respondents. Many of these MPs downplay or explicitly deny the relevancy of buildings, either in reflecting social norms or in structuring behaviour. This indicates the limitation of using political space as an analytical lens through which to better understand processes of belonging to Parliament, at least if we accept MPs' self-reported claims. Nonetheless, the findings do permit three considered observations about Westminster's parliamentary culture.

First, institutional norms embodied by the physical structure of Parliament look to privilege some groups above others (March and Olsen 1989). Party differences are the most obvious pattern in the typology of traditionalists, critics and minimisers – the majority of traditionalists are Conservatives and only Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs are critical of, what they perceive as, the 'cultural assumptions' contained in parliamentary buildings (Duerst-Lahti 2002: 385). All the MPs categorised as traditionalists express affection, many emphatic, for the older parliamentary buildings, and some provide explicit support for the argument that they 'feel at home' in Parliament (Yuval-Davis 2006: 197). For those MPs categorised

⁹² Interview 58 (16/06/10)

as critics, parliamentary buildings are evocative of social norms with which they do not identify. Many recall feeling daunted by the buildings when they were first elected, suggesting that the geographical perplexity of the parliamentary estate is part of the more general disorientation and confusion experienced by newcomers (Rosenblatt 2006; Rush and Giddings 2011). Moreover, it appears that parliamentary buildings communicate cultural assumptions to some representatives about 'who belongs' to Parliament, particularly in terms of gender and class (Parkinson 2009: 10). The physical appearance of Westminster Palace is, for these MPs, reminiscent of an exclusive public school or gentlemen's club from which they feel alienated. In this way, cultural norms embodied in parliamentary buildings look to be part of the process through which historically dominant MPs feel sense of entitlement and historically under-represented MPs are reminded of their marginalised status (Puwar 2004).

Second, buildings look to have greater impact on the perceptions of newly elected representatives. Although the interview data provides only a snapshot of attitudes at a particular time, according to many MPs' own perceptions, their feelings towards the buildings have changed during the time in Parliament. Those MPs who describe feeling daunted by, or alienated from, cultural norms embodied in the buildings, mostly talk about this in the past tense and focus on how they affect first impressions of Parliament. Furthermore, early (and for some, continued) feelings of belonging experienced by representatives appear to be influenced by their education and, or professional background. Traditionalists and critics alike make an explicit link between their sense of ease vis-à-vis exclusion from the physical surroundings of Parliament with their school, university or previous workplace. This indicates a perception that familiarity with similar institutional contexts affects a newcomer's experience of parliament which is related to gender and class as well as other factors such as race and age. Firsthand experience of Parliament as a working environment is cited by a number of interviewed MPs as particularly important in how newcomers respond to parliamentary buildings. The steady increase of so-called professional politicians in recent elections – those MPs who previously worked in Parliament – across all parties raises questions as to whether more of the 2010 cohort

experienced greater familiarity, and perhaps ease, compared with the 1997 intake, which was made up of MPs from more diverse backgrounds, including those from the community and voluntary sector.⁹³

Third, attitudes towards Westminster's parliamentary buildings provide support for the argument that physical space is both a reflection of power and a resource through which dominant groups maintain their hegemony (Crawford and Pini 2011; Puwar 2010; Parkinson 2009; Edwards 2004; Goodsell 1988; Ardener 2000; Imrie and Hall 2001; Weisman 1992; Rendell 2000). The power held by party whips to allocate (varying standards of) parliamentary offices to MPs is raised by a number of interviewees. The allocation of offices looks to be an early step in an MP's socialisation to Parliament – it is one of the first ways whips assert 'who is the boss' in order to ensure that MPs quickly learn that their primary function as a parliamentarian is to vote according to the party line (Rush and Giddings 2011: 112). The power to allocate offices is therefore a negotiating tool owned by whips and part of their ability to bestow privileges or punishments as they see fit. In this way, attitudes towards parliamentary buildings amongst MPs provide some insight into the institutional power grid which accords huge power to political parties (Bogdanor 2009, Wright 2010, Cowley and Stuart 2010).

Turning to the Scottish Parliament, attitudes amongst MSPs towards their parliamentary building are revealing of a more inclusive parliamentary culture. For the vast majority of its Members, the Scottish Parliament's purpose built building represents institutional values of participation and openness. This is possibly unsurprising amongst those MSPs elected 1999 – many of whom were involved in the campaign for devolution and articulated its founding aspirations and so might be expected to feel a strong sense of ownership over its physical outcome. More surprising perhaps is almost unanimous appreciation of the building amongst MSPs from all parties. An exception is Conservative interviewees who are more critical of the Scottish Parliament building, particularly when contrasted with Westminster

⁹³ 'Social background of MPs', *House of Commons library*, Note SN/SG/1528, updated 14 December 2010.

Palace. This might be explained by their original opposition to the construction of the building and down to a conservative distaste for modern buildings; however the sample, of only four Conservatives, is too small to draw strong conclusions.⁹⁴ On the basis of interviews with MSPs, and contrary to the Westminster data, there are therefore no obvious differences marking attitudes to parliamentary buildings and no evidence to suggest the norms privilege some groups above others in terms of gender (or class).

However, attitudes amongst MSPs cast doubt on the extent to which political space affects behaviour. Views on whether a semi-circular chamber encourages consensual interaction reveal widespread scepticism amongst MSPs from all parties. Moreover, and specifically in terms of the data collected here, some of the evidence used by some MSPs to support positive views of the Scottish Parliament building, particularly when being contrasted with Westminster, appears less than convincing. Claims made about the accessibility of the Scottish Parliament, substantiated for instance by the droves of visitors, ignore that Westminster also plays host to a huge number of visitors and some of the specific contentions made about Westminster are mistaken (for instance, that access is dependent on being invited by an MP). This seemingly reflects the tendency in such comparisons to romanticise the Scottish Parliament and caricature Westminster noted in other academic research (Mitchell 2010).

The findings, then, provide support for the first claim made in the literature – for both Westminster and the Scottish Parliament, political space sheds light on parliamentary culture (Crawford and Pini 2011; Puwar 2010; Parkinson 2009; Edwards 2004; Goodsell 1988). The buildings of Westminster and the Scottish Parliament can be said to represent their very different historical trajectories (March and Olsen 1989). Moreover, MP and MSP attitudes, and data gathered through participant observation, support the argument that buildings speak to ‘cultural

⁹⁴ The Conservative Party in Scotland favoured a different site for the Parliament, see for example, ‘MSPs back Holyrood Project, *BBC News*, 5 April 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/702968.stm>. Accessed October 2011.

assumptions' contained in the institutional culture and provide insight into how inclusive, or not, the culture is perceived and experienced by its representatives (Duerst-Lahti 2002: 385). The physical manifestation of institutional norms is therefore part of the process through which some representatives perceive 'who belongs' to Parliament (Parkinson 2009). At Westminster, attitudes to parliamentary buildings, specifically the Palace, reveal contested attitudes about the culture more generally and indicate that some MPs feel more at ease in the physical environment than others. While for traditionalists, the grandeur represents Britain's glorious long political history, critics associate the gothic architecture and ornate interiors with privilege, hierarchy and social exclusion. In Scotland, attitudes of MSPs converge much more greatly – there is general agreement that the buildings represent the founding aspirations of inclusion, accessibility and participation and there is no evidence that MSPs perceive institutional norms embodied in the buildings as socially exclusive in terms of gender or class. In this way, cultural aspects of the Scottish Parliament can be thought of as more inclusive for under-represented groups, including women, than Westminster.

The second claim – that political space 'conditions' behaviour – is more problematic, meaning that a link to representative claims, and in turn, to the substantive representation of women is difficult to establish. There are some examples to suggest that political space is a 'cue' in the process through which institutional norms contribute to notions of appropriate behaviour (Goodsell 1988; March and Olsen 1989). In both case studies, interviewees make a link between the buildings and how participants relate to one another. At Westminster, an association is frequently made between the confrontational shape of the chamber and adversarial politics, and some MPs make more nuanced observations about their effect, for instance one argues her physical environment influences the types of conversations she has and her conception of what is possible. In Scotland, many MSPs infer a relationship between what they perceive as an open building and accessibility for the public, as well as the acclaimed egalitarian structure of relations. However, as the literature on political space advises, a straightforward or obvious relationship with behaviour is difficult to ascertain and there are plenty of empirical examples to the

contrary (Goodsell 1988; Parkinson 2009). Sensible caution is borne out in this data by the perceived failure of the Scottish Parliament's seating layout to foster consensual behaviour in the chamber.

Nonetheless, it may be the case that self-reported claims in interviews are not the most effective method for gauging the (likely intangible and subconscious) impact of the physical environment on behaviour. Here, participant observation generates insights above and beyond representatives' self-perceptions. Indeed, and for example, shadowing MSPs at the Scottish Parliament indicated that the use of physical space subtly influences relations between representatives and others. As discussed in one of the opening vignettes, it appeared that the layout of MSP offices, demarcated primarily by political party, provides both opportunities and obstacles to communication. The open plan of researchers' offices along a long corridor looked to encourage informal chatting and familiarity, in a way not observed at Westminster, and communal seating areas provide a space for casual collaboration. However, mainly limited to Members from the same party, there appeared to be fewer spaces for informal contact between representatives and their staff from different parties – an observation spontaneously confirmed by some interviewees, for example the Conservative MSP who criticised the absence of spaces for informal socialising.⁹⁵ It may merely reflect, or perhaps contribute to, the party political culture in the Scottish Parliament, and demonstrates a further way in which the impact of political buildings is not necessarily obvious but may be amongst several factors explaining particular behaviour.

Furthermore, spending time at Westminster, I was repeatedly struck that Portcullis House looks and feels very different to the Palace. Although its inclusiveness can be contested – the main atrium is visible through a glass barrier to members of the public attending events on the first floor, however they are not permitted to use the café or coffee kiosk unless with a passholder, and furthermore, the more upmarket Adjournment restaurant is a dedicated space for MPs – indicating that some of the

⁹⁵ Interview 65 (01/06/10). Also Interviews 54 (03/06/10), 67 (16/06/10)

difference might be perception, it indisputably has a very different atmosphere. The large bright atrium area that forms the centrepiece of the building, buzzing with MPs, parliamentary researchers, interns and visitors, feels more professional and informal than the Palace. From the point of view of an observer, I could understand the MP who expressed a preference for the Portcullis committee rooms above the Palace when hosting a meeting. These brighter and more modern rooms feel more welcoming as a visitor – these rooms are less imposing and generally quicker and easier for non-passholders to get access to. Nametags identify each MP and witnesses and the seating area for the public is larger and more comfortable. In this way, the Palace can be conceived of as an inward looking and Portcullis House as outward facing building – where the Palace was designed with Members in mind, Portcullis looks to have been designed with the public also in mind.

Overstating the symbolic aspects of the institution, such as its buildings, risks ignoring that Westminster and the Scottish Parliament are more similar than intended or are frequently caricatured (Mitchell 2010). Although they look different and the Scottish Parliament was created with a purposeful rejection of Westminster's pomp and antiquity (of which the buildings are an aspect) (Megaughin and Jeffrey 2009), in both cases elected representatives operate within a party system according to strict party discipline (Bogdanor 2009, Wright 2010, Mitchell 2010, Cowley and Stuart 2010; Chaney 2008, Childs 2008; Mackay 2008). Despite this, and while a singular focus on buildings may paint a misleading picture of parliamentary processes, attitudes toward them amongst MPs and MSPs and participant observation data do provide insight into how representatives perceive the culture more generally. They capture subtle, and difficult to measure, aspects of the institutional culture that look to influence a representative's everyday and mundane experiences of the institution. They therefore provide a focus on the political and gendered context of the institution and insight into how this influences what representatives think is normal and possible; crucial for understanding the, 'claims-making, frames and contests which construct the meaning and content' of the substantive representation of women (Mackay 2008: 132).

Chapter Conclusion

In examining parliamentary buildings at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament, this chapter has considered an understudied topic in political science. It finds support for the first claim made in the extant literature on political space – parliamentary buildings and the spaces within them reveal and constitute institutional norms – but provides less clear-cut evidence for the second claim – that norms embodied in the buildings act as cues for appropriate behaviour. A sole focus on the architectural differences between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament risks ignoring their similarities and buying into the rhetoric about new politics surrounding the construction of the Scottish Parliament. Nonetheless, MPs' and MSPs' attitudes towards their parliamentary buildings provide insight into representatives' feelings about the culture more generally and the extent to which they feel they belong. Moreover, participant observation data provides examples of ways in which political space may affect behaviour in subtle, and perhaps subconscious, ways. The cultural norms embodied in Westminster's political spaces look to be a mediating factor in the process through which some MPs feel a sense of entitlement while others experience exclusion; while the absence of criticism based on gender or class norms at the Scottish Parliament points to a culture that is experienced as more inclusive by its Members.

Chapter 4: 'Cultural Sideshow'?

It's 10.55am on a Friday and I am watching the Commons chamber from the public viewing gallery. Pat McFadden, the Minister for Employment Relations and Postal Affairs, is addressing the House about a Private Member's Bill (PMB) submitted by a Labour backbencher. The view from the gallery is impressive – raised high, the chamber appears larger than it looked on the parliamentary tour, and there is an all encompassing view of the long green leather benches, large chandeliers, deep wood panelling and several crown motifs. The viewing gallery is hushed – there was an almost formidable atmosphere when entering and waiting to be directed down the steep stairs that run between rows of benches by the authoritative looking parliamentary officials wearing dark ceremonial evening suits with large brass medallions. There are strict rules regulating behaviour in the gallery – I am not allowed to take any possessions with me except my pen and paper. Before going into the viewing gallery, I was informed by a parliamentary researcher of the MP I am shadowing that the chamber will be relatively empty because most MPs spend Fridays in their constituency and are generally not that interested in PMBs which 'rarely get passed'. He is right – there are fewer than 30 MPs in a chamber that has enough seats for just over 400 participants and it quickly becomes apparent from his longwinded speech and the protests from the MP proposing the PMB that the Minister is talking the bill out. The Minister is warned several times by the Deputy Speaker to stick to the topic and appears happy to take interventions from other MPs. Although not busy, the atmosphere in the chamber continues to buzz. Exchanges are good natured – far from the heckling observed in a typical Prime Minister's Questions. There is a paradox between the formality and hushed tone of the viewing gallery and the generally relaxed atmosphere of the chamber. MPs talk to one another even when someone else is speaking, some sit sprawled on the

benches and there is an occasional heckle that would be unacceptable in most other workplaces. When I return to the office, the parliamentary researcher confirms that I witnessed a, not unusual, ritualistic filibustering. Rather than explaining directly that this Private Member's Bill will not be accepted by the government, the Minister of State spends over two hours speaking at length, and with repetition, until eventually the debate is adjourned.⁹⁶

I am sitting in the Terrace Café in Westminster Palace with a Liberal Democrat MP, their parliamentary researcher and an intern. The MP is preparing for the Public Bill Committee he is currently sitting on – having spent the last two weeks absorbed in the bill and appearing to know it in great detail. Flicking through the thick document of the draft bill, he finds the section he's looking for. Quickly referring to the briefing provided by an external group he has been conferring with, he highlights a section of the bill and jots down a few points. Without warning, he stands up, gathers his large pile of documents together and tells us to hurry up. In tow, the parliamentary researcher, intern and I quickly follow him out of the Terrace Café and charge down a long corridor. We take a right, then a left, down another corridor I have not yet seen despite having spent ten weeks shadowing MPs in Westminster. I ask him where we are going and he tells me we are going to the Amendments Office to submit more amendments to the bill. I ask him why we are in such a rush and he responds, only slightly impatiently, 'so that the amendments don't slip off the end of the bill'. Later, when we are less frenetic, I ask again why there was such urgency in submitting amendments. He explains that only a certain number of amendments will appear on the Order Paper and so they must be submitted before there are too many. Appearing perplexed when I ask him why this is, he

⁹⁶ Fieldnotes. Westminster, 13/03/09.

thinks that it is probably convention. Bored by the topic, he changes the subject.⁹⁷

It is 12.30am and I am on the second day of my third shadowing placement – this time with an SNP Member. She has been warmly welcoming, appearing to have overcome her initial touchiness when discussing my previous shadowing placements with two Labour MSPs, and has invited me to lunch with her in the main canteen of the Scottish Parliament. Bright and bustling with MSPs and parliamentary staff, we stop at the salad bar, pay and collect our cutlery. She leads me towards one of the large tables already occupied with around eight people and we take two of the empty seats opposite one another. She introduces me to the other people on the table, who are a mixture of SNP Ministers, MSPs and parliamentary researchers. They draw me into their conversation, asking who I am and what I'm doing. There is a fast turnover at the table – as one person finishes eating and says goodbye, they are quickly replaced with another. A Cabinet Secretary sits down next to me, chats throughout his lunch about my research and jokes about how inappropriate Westminster's ceremony would be in the Scottish Parliament. I am made to feel very at ease joining in with the group conversation and bantering between these SNP Ministers, Members and staff. Finishing our lunch, we pick up our trays and return them to the cleaning area.⁹⁸

It's 3pm and I am observing the proceedings of the Transport Committee. Although Scottish Parliament committee rooms are similar to those in Portcullis House in terms of their modern style and semi-circular seating layout, there are some differences. The absence of ceremony, when compared with Westminster, is visually evident from the rather more

⁹⁷ Fieldnotes, Westminster, 22/06/09.

⁹⁸ Fieldnotes, Scottish Parliament, 12/05/10.

functional navy suits, with a purple tie and the Scottish Parliament logo, worn by security guards compared with the ceremonial evening suits worn by parliamentary officials in Westminster Palace. Moreover, the language used by committee members is noticeably more casual than that observed in Westminster, for instance that used by the Minister giving evidence to the Transport Committee, 'people get a bit snotty about – I think that is parliamentary language – a pen and paper approach'. The informality and familiarity is no doubt partly explained by the smaller size of the Scottish Parliament, however from the perspective of an observer, the absence of ceremony looks to be part and parcel of the informal atmosphere.⁹⁹

Introduction

Parliamentary ceremony – its presence and relative absence – is a stark difference between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. Although it has received little attention in traditional studies of Parliament (Crewe and Muller 2006), an ethnographic study of the House of Lords indicates that parliamentary ceremony is integral to fundamental struggles of power. Westminster, an institution characterised by a high degree of pomp and circumstance, is famed for its extravagant State Opening of Parliament, the daily Speaker's Procession and excessively polite terms of address in debate (Crewe 2005). The Scottish Parliament, in contrast, is marked by the explicit decisive rejection of ceremony, at least partly because of its association with Westminster (Mackay 2006). Viewed as, 'too arcane, with too much antiquated pomp and ceremony, too remote and inaccessible and too much marked by an odd mix of clubbiness and a stylised adversarialism of opposition for its own sake' (Megaughin and Jeffrey 2009: 9), the founders of the Scottish Parliament consciously tried to foster a different organisational culture that would be more accessible and more inclusive. Opting for a modern building, transparent procedures and clear rules for debate, they hoped to reject, what was perceived as,

⁹⁹ Fieldnotes, Scottish Parliament, 23/03/10.

stuffy and deferential, in favour of a more welcoming and informal culture (Brown 2000).

The findings suggest that Westminster is felt to be less inclusive than the Scottish Parliament in terms of both gender and class. Westminster is repeatedly compared to an exclusive public school and gentlemen's club in interviews with MPs and its informal culture is perceived as privileging its culturally dominant groups above others. In contrast, the rejection of hierarchy and pomposity in the Scottish Parliament is consistently remarked upon by its Members and is linked to the more informal culture they perceive to characterise their Parliament. It is clear that the importance of the absence of ceremony as an indicator of its departure from Westminster should not be overstated – the findings provide support for the consensus in the literature assessing the Scottish Parliament ten years after devolution that apparent differences between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament may conceal more crucial similarities, not least in the context of the party political culture in both (Carman and Shepherd 2009; Johnston 2009; Keating and Cairney 2009; McMillan 2009; Mitchell 2010). Nonetheless, employing political ceremony as an analytical lens captures cultural aspects of these institutions that, though difficult to measure, are thought to be critical for the everyday experiences of representatives (Mackay 2008).

Westminster: 'a rather bizarre institution that's stuck in another age'

MPs can once again be categorised into three groups according to their perceptions of parliamentary ceremonies: *traditionalists*, *minimisers* and *critics*.¹⁰⁰ These groups differ not only in terms of their fondness, ambivalence or dislike of parliamentary traditions, but also in whether they notice cultural assumptions contained within them and the extent to which they consider this a problem. The interview findings demonstrate that political party is the primary factor in how MPs view parliamentary ceremonies, but that there are some differences according to those MPs identified

¹⁰⁰ The term minimiser refers to MPs who downplay the importance of ceremonial aspects of parliament and follows Faith Armitage's paper 'Are Parliament's Ceremonies and Rituals a Problem for British Democracy?' presented at PSA Annual Conference, Manchester, 2009.

as active on women’s issues and those matched (correlated by sex differences). Table 4.1 shows that *traditionalists* are made up nearly entirely of Conservative MPs, mostly men, and one Labour man. These MPs express strong affection for parliamentary culture and provide a staunch defence for it remaining as it is. They either fail to see the social assumptions contained in parliamentary traditions, or they do and think people should adjust. *Minimisers* are made up of MPs who have mixed views on the culture – while they can see social norms contained within them, they generally accept these as relatively harmless. This group is made up of MPs from all parties and equal numbers of men and women (although more MPs identified as active on women’s issues, nine, compared with five matched MPs). *Critics*, constituted entirely by Labour MPs and Liberal Democrats, and more MPs identified as active on women’s issues than matched – nine compared with six (though one more man than woman), express strong criticism of some aspect of parliamentary culture and a keen awareness of the way in which social norms contained within traditions may privilege some groups above others. Gender and class are most apparent in the critiques of parliamentary ceremony, however these intersect with race, age and professional background.

Table 4.1 Typology of Attitudes to Parliamentary Ceremony

	Traditionalists	Minimisers	Critics
Labour	1 (10%)	8 (58%)	10 (67%)
Conservative	9 (90%)	3 (21%)	0 (0%)
Lib Dem	0 (0%)	3 (21%)	5 (33%)
Total	10	14	15
MPs identified as active on women’s issues and matched sample (sex differences).			
	3x identified (2x women)	9x identified (7x women)	9x identified (7x women)
	7x matched (8x)	5x matched (7x)	6x matched (8x)

	men)	men)	men)
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Traditionalists

A distinct group of MPs, labelled ‘traditionalists’, are particularly affectionate towards parliamentary ceremony. These MPs are made up nearly entirely of Conservative MPs, nine out of ten of whom are men and two of whom are women, and a lone male Labour MP. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they are characterised by their conservative approach to change and an assumption that the aged nature of parliamentary traditions makes them harmless at worst and a good thing at best. These MPs vary in the strength with which they defend the traditions, yet they are united in their uncritical reading of the social norms contained within them. It appears that, amongst this group of MPs, the majority of whom are Conservative men, there is less acceptance/understanding of the notion that gendered and other social norms of class, race and education, affect representatives’ experience of the institution.

Fondness for parliamentary traditions, particularly its ceremonies and procedures, amongst some of these MPs is evident from their emphatic tones when explaining how they feel about Parliament, ‘I get a little bit passionate when I say this – I love this place, I love the House of Commons. I think it matters so much’¹⁰¹ and, ‘I love them [traditions]. I love them because they work, and they work well’.¹⁰² There is general agreement that, ‘traditions and ceremony provide us with a sense of history’¹⁰³ and add, ‘a level of seriousness and gravitas to the proceedings’.¹⁰⁴ Another MP explains that all institutions inevitably and necessarily have ‘visual representations’ which symbolise their power and thinks we, ‘tinker with them at our peril’:

The traditions could on the face of it be mocked as foolish – why are they wearing 17th Century court dress? That’s a very strange thing to do.

¹⁰¹ Interview 9 (14/01/10)
¹⁰² Interview 27 (24/01/10)
¹⁰³ Interview 7 (05/07/10)
¹⁰⁴ Interview 36 (24/02/10)

Why is the Sergeant at Arms walking around with a sword? Why does the Speaker wear funny clothes? Why do people in the Lords take off their tricorne hats quite a lot? You could say that's obviously silly, but I would argue that's the visual representation of what happens over there.¹⁰⁵

Other MPs, who claim to be ambivalent and unaffected by parliamentary ceremonies are nonetheless uncritical and assume they can only be positive. For instance, one unconcernedly calls them 'habits',¹⁰⁶ while another argues, 'traditions are frills, an easy thing to knock by so called reformers – people who take their tie off – that's not a reform, that's just dressing differently. So I think they're more irrelevant than people think they are'. Despite this, he argues that traditions are important to, 'give people prominence who might not normally get it' and thinks they are a critical safeguard to abuse of power by increasingly centralised government. For this reason, he tells us to, 'beware the moderniser'.¹⁰⁷ His colleague is sceptical of the oft cited argument that old-fashioned terms of address can improve behaviour in the chamber, however he thinks they are harmless, 'apparently it contributes to a more polite atmosphere in here – I don't know if that's true or not. I'd never go to the wall to defend it nor would I rush to change it. And generally speaking, I'm of a Burkean mould, so I'm inclined to think that those things handed down to us through the generations often have more value than people realise'.¹⁰⁸

Many of these MPs' approval of the parliamentary ceremonies mean they do not spontaneously identify the gender, class and race assumptions pointed out by their more critical colleagues. There is general agreement that the style of debate is, 'easy to pick up quickly'.¹⁰⁹ One MP asked whether the old-fashioned terms of address or

¹⁰⁵ Interview 17 (20/07/10)

¹⁰⁶ Interview 31 (06/01/10)

¹⁰⁷ Interview 2 (29/06/10)

¹⁰⁸ Interview 14 (16/03/10)

¹⁰⁹ Interview 7 (05/07/10)

yah-boo style can be exclusionary flatly replies, ‘I don’t think that’s a problem’.¹¹⁰ Another MP, a Conservative woman, mentions that she prefers consensual debate but does not dwell on the point and is the only woman interviewee not to address the gendered arguments about aggressive debate.¹¹¹ While these MPs do not overtly identify social norms in the traditions, many indirectly make a link between their own comfort and ease in the environment and their backgrounds. One MP refers to the familiarity of the architecture because of the university she went to,¹¹² while another explains that he was not daunted when he first arrived, perhaps because, ‘I had the fortune of being at university at a place that’s been around 400 years or more. One of the schools I went to was a similar kind of thing’.¹¹³ Yet another thinks his military background, and his familiarity with institutions of this type, provides him with his claimed ability to remain indifferent to parliamentary culture.¹¹⁴

Minimisers

The respondents characterised as minimisers neither strongly disapprove of nor defend parliamentary ceremonies and are made up of MPs from all parties, including both men and women. Fourteen of the 39 MPs asked about parliamentary ceremony are ambivalent or hold mixed views. Unlike traditionalists these MPs do not defend parliamentary ceremonies and indeed some express criticism, however, they differ from critics in not advocating or prioritising reform. These MPs range from those who think the ceremonies are irrelevant and that one should not get exercised by them, and those who view them as problematic but do not prioritise reform. The MPs in this group who are critical, albeit reservedly, of parliamentary ceremonies provide insight into relatively conscious adjustment to institutional norms in that they are prepared to adapt rather than challenge them.

¹¹⁰ Interview 31 (06/01/10)

¹¹¹ Interview 9 (14/01/10)

¹¹² Interview 9 (14/01/10)

¹¹³ Interview 31 (06/01/10)

¹¹⁴ Interview 2 (29/06/10)

Several MPs are mixed in their views on parliamentary ceremonies, seeing both good and bad in them. A Labour man argues the ceremony is illustrative of the British constitution:

It can be on one level bizarre and farcical, but on another level it can be quite instructive... It's actually a code for the whole British constitution – the strengths and the weaknesses. When you look at all this pageantry there is a point to it all. It's our constitution or our lack of constitution, whatever way you look at it. How much we should keep and how much we should get rid of I'm not sure.¹¹⁵

A Labour woman elected in 1997 explains their existence, 'well for good reasons, to manifest the history and significance of the place. And for the bad reason, of being overly hung up on tradition at the expense of effectiveness'.¹¹⁶ Another Labour woman sees positive and negative attributes in the traditions and argues, 'how Parliament works suits some people more than others', emphasising that she enjoys it:

There's pros and cons of the great weight of tradition. One of the good things is that you feel you're at the end of a very long line of effort from predecessors and you feel the import of that. But it can be stifling in terms of trying to change things – in terms of how Parliament works, to make it more relevant to people 'out there'. I mean I enjoy a lot of it, but then again, it suits me in a way – I like the adversarial nature, I like standing up 'two swords length' away from the Tories and having a right go. I like seeing the whites of their eyes! [laughter]¹¹⁷

A Liberal Democrat MP explains his ambivalence on the topic, 'ceremony is interesting for me because I'm really not that interested in it, but I'm not

¹¹⁵ Interview 38 (05/07/10)

¹¹⁶ Interview 16 (20/01/10)

¹¹⁷ Interview 24 (26/01/10)

disrespectful of tradition. I don't worship it, I don't respect it for its own sake.'¹¹⁸ Others are mildly critical but do not prioritise change, 'the ceremony doesn't bother me hugely, it's not something I want to sweep away, but equally it doesn't grab me'¹¹⁹ and 'there's just such bizarre rules on things. I'm learning, but I'd still rather not have to do it'.¹²⁰ While both these MPs are not impressed by ceremonial aspects of Parliament, they suggest 'tweaking' them at most. Another MP, a Labour Minister at the time of the interview, emphasises that he does not feel strongly about parliamentary traditions, however he describes challenging procedural rules or what he refers to as 'the establishment' in a small way by his insistence on using 'ordinary language' in a written parliamentary answer. He thinks it is important to challenge the everyday norms of how things are done, especially in this case where tradition is getting in the way of simple communication. However, he describes himself as an 'evolutionary' rather than 'revolutionary', 'I don't like big-bang changes normally, because I think it upsets the horses. It just doesn't work because it goes too far, evolution is a far better option'.¹²¹

Others are dispassionate about the ceremonies, but critical of those who have spent energy trying to reform them. For instance, a female Liberal Democrat is unconcerned by the ceremony but can understand why others, particularly young MPs, question it. She is aware there is a danger of becoming institutionalised, but emphasises that newcomers should not seek reform before they fully appreciate Parliament:

There is a point to it [ceremony and tradition] – it takes you a while to understand what that is. One of the jokes when I came here was that everybody on the Modernisation Committee had been here at least 20 years! That was wrong, because you can become institutionalised in a place like this, but you can't have someone coming straight in off the streets, not understanding the place, and trying to change it. I think,

¹¹⁸ Interview 11 (30/01/10)

¹¹⁹ Interview 6 (26/01/10)

¹²⁰ Interview 22 (18/01/10)

¹²¹ Interview 26 (28/01/10)

why did you come here if you immediately wanted to start changing the place?¹²²

A Labour man, who identifies himself as a 'don't care' in response to a question about his view of parliamentary traditions, spontaneously raises the gendered nature of the issue, claiming that his colleagues, particularly women, who sought to reform them were 'missing the point'. He argues that the rules are irrelevant and that addressing other issues is more pressing:

I suppose I'm a 'don't care'. When this government was elected in 1997, I was the exact average age of Labour MP, and there were a lot of people, particularly the younger MPs and the women, not just women, who wanted to reform some of the stodgier, longer traditions and I always thought they were missing the point. Not that I agreed or disagreed with them, but the point of being here is to represent your constituency or party, and trying to get control of the power centres, and is the world a better place now that we don't have to put a hat on to call a point of order? Not really, it's irrelevant, it's the rules.¹²³

Critics

Critics constitute the largest group of respondents in relation to their view of parliamentary ceremony. Made up of ten Labour and five Liberal Democrats, and an almost even number of women and men MPs (though more identified as active on women's issues than those matched), the 'critics' are best characterised by dislike of parliamentary ceremony. Crucially, their disdain towards particular parliamentary ceremonies feeds into wider critical attitudes towards more general aspects of parliamentary culture. Many provide strong support for historical institutionalist approaches, arguing that parliamentary ceremonies institutionalise Members to the dominant modes of behaviour (March and Olsen 1989; Thelen 1999). Indeed, some argue such ceremonies contribute to the mystique of Parliament which alienates the

¹²² Interview 32 (21/01/10)

¹²³ Interview 13 (19/01/10)

public, while others are critical for practical reasons, arguing the ceremonies are indicative of the inadequacies of Parliament as a working environment. Most importantly in terms of belonging and its relationship to representative claims, many MPs emphasise how they feel at odds with social assumptions which they perceive to be contained within parliamentary ceremonies. These MPs describe ways in which the ceremonies seem to them as indicative of a parliamentary culture which looks and feels similar to an exclusive public school or gentlemen's club with which they do not identify. Gender and class assumptions are particularly evident in their perceptions; however race, age and professional norms also play out. The most explicitly gendered narrative focuses on the parliamentary sitting hours, which are raised by many MPs in discussions of parliamentary traditions. Critique of the hours is made primarily by Labour women, particularly those elected in 1997, but also includes Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs known to be active on women's issues and a small number of 'matched MPs' – those who are not publicly known for their activity on women's issues.¹²⁴

In general terms amongst critics, ceremonies are criticised for 'stuffiness' and contributing to a parliamentary culture that is regressive to change.¹²⁵ A Labour woman criticises traditions that 'mystify' and make MPs 'seem remote and important'.¹²⁶ A Liberal Democrat talks about resisting the pressure of her environment to conform to institutional norms of behaviour. She provides a sense that it would be easy to be socialised into the dominant ways of behaving, 'I'm very conscious of trying to use modern language, to talk like a human being – I occasionally lapse into talking like the others which terrifies me!'¹²⁷ A Labour man argues that change is opposed because it is not perceived to be in the favour of dominant structures:

¹²⁴ Some of the Labour women elected in 1997 criticised the family unfriendly nature of parliament and were involved in efforts to reform it (Childs 2004). It is therefore less surprising that this group would offer a gendered critique of parliament.

¹²⁵ Interview 1 (22/06/10)

¹²⁶ Interview 12 (26/01/10)

¹²⁷ Interview 23 (11/01/10)

From my experience as an avid reformer in the last few parliaments, there are very powerful vested interests in an institution like Parliament that don't want change and don't like change – you can think of the whole expenses apparatus as a case in point. You can say the same about almost anything else from the catering to employment contracts to staff to the ceremonial and so on. I think achieving change has always been very slow and very torturous. We achieved a lot, but there's still some way to go.¹²⁸

Another MP, again a Labour man, provides strong support for the view that ceremonies are indicative of more general parliamentary culture that institutionalises representatives to dominant ways of behaving. He contends that in preserving the status quo, the institutional culture de-radicalises Members and co-opts them to a system that favours and reinforces hegemonic power structures. He argues MPs are socialised regardless of their social background, mentioning, 'race, gender and age' in particular. Asked about his views of parliamentary ceremonies, he responds:

I just ignore them. I think the term parliamentarian should be a term of abuse rather than something that's aspired to. My view is that this place should be 'cracked open'. The culture around it – the formal and informal processes associated with it – institutionalise and create a member of the political class irrespective of race, gender, age. This is a generic outcome that creates the informal laws of the game, who has political power in terms of the press and corporations, a sense of caution and inability to take risks, internal labour markets based on couriership favour and mentorism which is very conservative and safety first.

¹²⁸ Interview 37 (27/07/10)

Interviewed soon after the 2010 general election, he talks about watching newcomers adjust to the tribal and adversarial politics that characterises dominant forms of behaviour:

Six weeks in and the new MPs are appropriating the characteristics of shouting, Punch and Judy politics and they probably all came in with a mandate to change things. It's systemic, so I don't blame the individual, it's very difficult to resist – it's just a series of rituals and performance art. Even ones you think are radical and iconoclastic are actually just performing a vaudeville routine more often than not, and are as narcissistic as the rest. To the extent that I don't really bother with it.¹²⁹

Many Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs express frustration about the inefficiency of Parliament as a working environment and describe how it hinders their representative function, 'I'm not one to debunk the history and traditions here, but to do things in exactly the same way assumes that what was appropriate 500 years ago is appropriate now'¹³⁰ and, 'when I arrived in Parliament I thought they were insane because it was eight weeks before I got an office or a computer'.¹³¹ Others criticise particular parliamentary procedures, 'I don't understand why they don't gather votes to one part of the day like they do in the Scottish Parliament. My office is three buildings away from the chamber, it's such a waste of time'¹³² and, 'the idea that in the 21st Century we have to go into these lobbies where someone sits on a high stool, like in a Victorian school, and ticks you off on a register. It takes ages and you can sometimes be locked in that lobby for quite some time – it's a nonsense'.¹³³

This MP is not alone in likening Parliament to a school. Indeed the majority of MPs in the critics group, 11 of the 14, specifically liken Westminster to a public school or gentlemen's club. Such analogies suggest that Parliament is perceived by many MPs

¹²⁹ Interview 19 (22/06/10)

¹³⁰ Interview 1 (22/06/10)

¹³¹ Interview 23 (11/01/10)

¹³² Interview 23 (11/01/10)

¹³³ Interview 5 (18/01/10)

to represent privilege and exclusivity. Both class and gender norms are particularly apparent in the association of Parliament with a public school or gentlemen's club, although race, age and professional background are also relevant in MPs' views. For example, a Liberal Democrat MP describes Parliament as an exclusive public school he does not identify with. He describes feeling, 'at the bottom of the pile', particularly when he was first elected, in an institution that is exclusionary to newcomers:

There are a lot of procedures that are totally arcane, hopefully some of those will be swept aside with the current review. One of my predecessors described Westminster as the longest running farce in the West End! I think sometimes that's not a bad description for some of the antics that go on – both in terms of procedures and the way people behave. It sometimes feels, although I didn't go to public school, like a very exclusive public school. When I arrived in 2005, the first thing you realise is that you're the bottom of the pile and someone who has been here for 30 years is at the top of the pile. It's got nowt to do with how good they are, it's just how long you've been here. I think the quicker we get rid of that sort of attitude the better.¹³⁴

This MP talks about how difficult his job was because of the delay in providing him with basic office facilities and attributes it to the hierarchy that determines office allocation, 'what happens after every election is that offices are vacated. Senior Members have a look around and pick the offices they want, then the new boys, or girls, get what's left. You've to wait 6-8 weeks – all I had for the first few weeks here was a coat hanger with a red ribbon to hang my sword in and a locker!'

A black woman MP talks about her marginality in terms of race, sex and age which culminated to make her feel like an outsider when she was first elected. Asked if there are any traditions she doesn't like, she jokes that she does not know where to

¹³⁴ Interview 30 (22/02/10)

start, and thinks that they can be explained by a, particularly British, reverence for history, 'I mean, if you went into the cloakroom, you'd see that every MP has a peg with their name on it and every peg has their name, a hook and a loop of red ribbon. And the red ribbon is there for MPs to hang their sword. And nobody has actually carried a sword into Parliament for 150 years, but that's how long it takes Parliament to change.' Asked directly whether she thinks those types of traditions can affect feelings of belonging to Parliament, she replies, 'I think the problem with these traditions is that people do feel excluded... I remember coming here and feeling excluded by it – these were not *my* traditions if you see what I mean.' She returns to this point later in the interview when talking about arriving to Parliament as a young black woman, 'you felt like you didn't belong here. You felt like it wasn't your history and it wasn't your traditions. The House of Commons is very much a stone exemplification of the history of the British ruling class. That's the truth of it.'¹³⁵

Another MP, a male Liberal Democrat, describes how he does not feel part of the club and thinks that class and professional backgrounds are factors in how people relate to the culture:

It feels like a rather bizarre institution that's stuck in another age... I suspect it feels less attractive to people who haven't been to public school and have had no connection with an institution of this sort. If you're the son of a Member of Parliament, or a judge, or a member of the professions, then you can slip into this very easily I'm sure... it's very like a gentleman's club, it's quite cliquey, you have the tea room and tables and areas for one party... I've never felt part of the club here in the way that some just love it and will devote their lives to it, like this bizarre thing of people choosing to get married here in this bloody chapel underground. Why get married in the place you work?! It's just bizarre to me – but they just soak up the whole thing.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Interview 8 (12/01/10)

¹³⁶ Interview 28 (23/06/10)

Many MPs who discuss the clubby nature of Parliament share the view that such an atmosphere will be more familiar to people from privileged backgrounds. Here, class seems particularly pertinent both in how these MPs themselves experience the institution and in how they speculate about feelings of entitlement amongst their colleagues. A Labour woman elected in 1997 describes feeling that Parliament was a forbidden place and she was somehow breaking the rules when she first arrived:

You look around here, it is like a club – the leather chairs and so on. When I first came I described it like some very ornate public school. I only knew it from books and films! It felt like, ‘are we allowed to be here?!’ You know when you’re a child and you start school and everything seems much bigger than you and you think, ‘how am I ever going to find my way around this place?’ I didn’t know where I was allowed to go, how to deal with the attendants and this sort of thing. I think some Members of the House are more used to that environment than others, because of their backgrounds – if they went to public school or if they’d been to Oxford. But I think for some of us who had a more ‘run of the mill’ school experience, a good one, but more conventional – in a 1960s building – it’s a bit different!¹³⁷

Yet another Labour man describes the exclusive nature of Parliament:

The first thing that strikes lots of people when they come to Parliament is that it rather resembles a gentlemen’s club, in its architecture, atmosphere, and very low quality food. That obviously is an environment more commonly frequented by conservatives with a small c and wouldn’t have much appeal to other people. It’s similar to a boarding school in terms of the male clubbable atmosphere. I mean, it’s got significantly better, but I think it’s something that still surprises people when they first arrive here.

¹³⁷ Interview 4 (04/02/10)

Interviewed soon after the 2010 general election, this male MP thinks that reform will slow down because of the increase in Tory MPs who, 'tend to be conservative – they don't want change, they want to keep things as they are, and they are now the biggest group in the Commons. A lot of the Conservative men are from public school, the whole atmosphere and character of the place is something they feel quite comfortable with. So the simple arithmetic of numbers means that reform is now going to slow down.'¹³⁸

*Parliamentary Hours: 'they're a habit, not practical or efficient'.*¹³⁹

Attitudes towards parliamentary ceremonies seem to be indicative of more general attitudes towards parliamentary culture – most MPs' criticism of ceremony appears bound up in their frustration with other aspects of parliamentary procedure, conventions and norms, not normally considered ceremonial. Many MPs asked in interviews about their views of parliamentary ceremony, traditions or customs took a wide view of what these encompassed and talked about other aspects of Commons life. Crucially for the issue of belonging and representative claims, a specifically gendered critique of parliamentary traditions was discernible amongst this broader and more general criticism. This is perhaps unsurprising given that over half of the MPs interviewed were identified as active on women's issues and so might be expected to be overtly conscious of gender.¹⁴⁰ The criticism of how Parliament is particularly hostile to women in general and women with families focuses primarily on the parliamentary sitting hours. Of the 41 MPs interviewed, 24 discuss the sitting hours. Of these a majority, 15, spontaneously raise the sitting hours when asked about parliamentary traditions, customs or ceremonies. That many MPs talk about parliamentary traditions and sitting hours in the same terms suggests they perceive them to be part of the wider parliamentary culture. The other nine MPs who discuss the hours do so when discussing other topics, for instance, the late nights needed for networking in the party, being a young MP with a family and

¹³⁸ Interview 37 (27/07/10)

¹³⁹ Interview 10 (12/01/10)

¹⁴⁰ For more detail of the criticism made of parliamentary culture by Labour women elected in 1997. see Childs (2004) and Sones et al (2005).

as a reason given by a former MSP for why the Scottish Parliament is more family friendly than Westminster.¹⁴¹

The vast majority, 18, of MPs who discuss them are critical of sitting hours which they describe as extremely long and unpredictable. This is on the basis of their own personal experience of managing caring responsibilities as an MP and those who are sympathetic to colleagues that the sitting hours make having a family difficult. Criticism is made by MPs from both the *critics* and *minimisers* categories, meaning that some of those who are ambivalent about other types of parliamentary ceremony are critical of the Commons’ hours. Sixteen are MPs identified as acting for women and three are matched, meaning that the vast majority of MPs who are critical of the hours are those who are identified as ‘acting for’ women. This is closely, but less starkly, correlated with sex differences: thirteen women and six men MPs are critical of the hours. Eleven are Labour MPs, four are Conservative and four are Liberal Democrats. In other words, it is mostly but not only Labour women MPs, who notice and criticise the parliamentary sitting hours. Only five MPs, all of whom are categorised as *traditionalists* except one *minimiser*, are uncritical or unapologetically defend the sitting hours as necessary, even at the expense of having women representatives. Of these five, four are Conservatives – three men and one woman and one is a Labour man.

Table 4.2 Attitudes to Parliamentary Sitting Hours

	Critical	Defend
Labour	11 (58%)	4 (80%)
Conservatives	4 (21%)	1 (20%)
Lib Dems	4 (21%)	0 (0%)
TOTAL	19	5

¹⁴¹ Interviews 32 (21/01/10), 6 (26/01/10), 2 (29/06/10). Four MPs were asked about the hours directly when the topic seemed pertinent. Interviews 18 (03/02/10), 11 (30/01/10), 14 (16/03/10), 27 (24/01/10)

<i>MSPs identified as active on women's issues and matched sample (sex differences).</i>		
	16 identified (13 women)	1 identified (1 woman)
	3 matched (6 men)	4 matched (4 men)

For many of the interviewed MPs then, parliamentary hours are the primary issue that needs to be dealt with in order to make Parliament a more hospitable place for women. Quite simply, the hours, ‘were established when being a Member of Parliament was a second job, and they just don’t fit in with family life at all – it’s ridiculous’.¹⁴² Many Labour women MPs refer to the debate about the sitting hours after they were elected in 1997. There is agreement that people who opposed shorter hours did so because of the camaraderie fostered by such long hours: ‘what is unique about this place is the 24 hour culture – you don’t just come and work here, you come and live here almost and that is something people missed and wanted – I didn’t and a lot of people didn’t. It’s like a club, you hear that all the time. So I think the hours need to be changed’.¹⁴³ Another MP agrees that the opponents of shorter hours enjoyed, ‘the collegiate, the boarding school nature of the old House of Commons’.¹⁴⁴

A male Labour MP addresses both gender and class assumptions by arguing they are a result of the historically rather more leisurely lifestyle of an MP. He thinks there is a macho pride involved in late night sittings and that opposition to change is because ‘they’re institutionalised. They are used to a world where mornings are free, you start in the afternoon and you finish late at night. It’s almost like a badge of honour – you’ll hear them bragging, “oh we had an all night sitting” [thumps table to demonstrate point, gruff voice]’. His colleague, talking about balancing her job with her family life, similarly sees other MPs’ preferences for longer hours not only in terms of sex, but also class:

¹⁴² Interview 10 (12/01/10)
¹⁴³ Interview 21 (03/02/10)
¹⁴⁴ Interview 29 (06/01/10)

I don't see this as my leisure time; I see it as my working time. I don't use Parliament as some sort of gentleman's club where at the end of the day I want to go and have a glass of port. I've never quite understood that – and maybe it's because of my background – men working long hours away from their family and going to a gentleman's club at the end of it to spend more time away from their families.¹⁴⁵

There is a qualitative difference in how Conservative women MPs criticise the sitting hours. The few who do, three in total, are markedly more restrained than their Labour and Liberal Democrat colleagues in their critique and tone. For instance, one Conservative woman talks about the competing pressures of being an MP while managing domestic life and being the primary carer. Despite clearly experiencing this as difficult she believes the hours are inevitable, 'you sort of have to accept that Parliament is a bit different – it isn't like any other job'. Interviewed before the general election, and hence when Labour were in government, this MP recognises that sitting hours are an important tool for the Opposition:

I'm certainly grateful that in the time I've been here we've stopped the very late night sessions that went on into the middle of the night – that would have just been shattering. On the other hand, I completely accept, and was therefore reluctant to vote for it, that the power to frustrate the Government's business by staying up all night is the only tool the Opposition has to make the Government listen and to draw compromise. And so, as traumatic as it was, I could easily see the point of it.

Moreover, she draws a relationship between the hours and the 'collegiate' nature of Parliament, and is sympathetic to her colleagues who have to go back to their 'lonely bedsit' if the hours are shortened:

¹⁴⁵ Interview 4 (04/02/10)

it's tough on those who aren't going home to their families every evening, which will comprise at least half of the Parliament. So they quite like having stuff on here in the evening – they have something going on Mondays and Tuesdays, the late nights, then they'll have to get on with it and do whatever they're doing in London the other nights. I think that's a sort of reasonable compromise.¹⁴⁶

Another Conservative MP similarly links the parliamentary culture with its sitting hours. Asked if there are any parliamentary traditions or procedures she would change, she identifies the hours, 'well I think the interesting issue for future parliaments may well be the hours that Parliament sits. I was in favour of having – I think Mondays you still need to start at 2.30pm and go on late, because people need time to get from their constituencies, otherwise their time in the constituency is very constricted. But Tuesdays, I voted for an early start and an early finish.'¹⁴⁷ However mildly expressed her criticism during the interview, it should be noted that this MP was one of the few from her party to vote in this way (Childs 2008; Brazier et al 2005). A Conservative man, identified as publicly active on women's issues, demonstrates greater tolerance than many of his party colleagues for the accommodation of MPs' with families. However, his wording indicates he comes from a different perspective to those representatives who are overtly and more strongly critical of the hours. Asked whether Parliament is less clubby, he says, 'yes and that's partly a reflection of the hours and things, but that's not necessarily *all* a bad things, because you also need the representation of people who have young families. We're going to have some problems with these expenses because it may make it more difficult.'¹⁴⁸

Several of these MPs point out that the clubby environment fostered by long hours is not only the preference of old-hands accustomed to a particular routine and social

¹⁴⁶ Interview 20 (04/03/10)

¹⁴⁷ Interview number and date removed for anonymity.

¹⁴⁸ Interview 35 (04/02/10)

life, but is also in the interests of the power bases within political parties. An MP, who was previously a whip for his party, thinks parliamentary traditions, such as long hours, are about a macho pride involved in late night sittings and are also about maintaining the power of political parties, 'I was a whip and there was a view that if you didn't have the bugger's ear, they were getting up to all sorts of savoury action!'.¹⁴⁹ His Labour colleague agrees that long hours are an important mechanism for control. Asked why there was a return to longer hours, she responds, 'I think there was a feeling by some – this was cross party by the way, including some of my own – that we were losing, dare I say it, a more club atmosphere in the place. I think particularly from the perspective of the whips, was a sense that, "oh hang on, we can't keep tabs on people. We've got to get people to think they're part of a party political family here". They were worried about that breaking down when MPs weren't around so much and it meant the whips had less personal contact time.'¹⁵⁰ Another MP, a Conservative woman, shares the view that the long hours foster unity within political parties, 'political parties are coalitions – it's quite important you get to know each other, you're a team, you come in a tribe. It's quite important that feeling is fostered and that was fostered hugely in the days because they were so shacked up together.'¹⁵¹

Only five MPs defend the sitting hours as they are. As noted above, these are mostly Conservative and mostly male, excepting one Conservative woman and one Labour man. All of these MPs are amongst those who also provide a robust defence for parliamentary ceremonies overall (except one Labour man who is ambivalent), once again suggesting many MPs view both ceremonies and the sitting hours as part of a wider parliamentary culture. These MPs address the arguments put forward by colleagues about the inhospitable nature of Parliament for women, however they either dismiss them or think women rather than Parliament, should adjust. The Labour man who holds that his female colleagues were 'missing the point' when they tried to reform the 'some of the stodgier, longer traditions', in particular questions

¹⁴⁹ Interview 15 (19/03/10)

¹⁵⁰ Interview 4 (04/02/10)

¹⁵¹ Interview 20 (04/03/10). Note that this interview took place before the general election and she is talking about camaraderie within parties rather than the coalition government.

the value of earlier finishes and does not consider the benefits to colleagues with caring responsibilities, 'Is the world a better place now that we finish earlier on Wednesdays than we used to? Probably for me it is, because I can go home – there's no whip's business on Thursday. It doesn't make a great deal of difference.'¹⁵² A Conservative man jokes that for the MPs who do not live within commuting distance to London shorter hours will be detrimental to family life, 'People have commented before that putting a bunch of MPs out with nothing to do in a big city isn't terribly likely to be good for family life! [laughs]'¹⁵³

Two of these MPs are explicitly and strongly opposed to reform of the hours. A male Conservative MP disagrees on point of principle that women are under-represented in politics, 'I do a pretty good job of representing *everybody* in my constituency and so do all MPs. Therefore the fact there are fewer women in Parliament than the numbers in the electorate, or indeed fewer black people, or indeed fewer plumbers, or indeed fewer stupid people is neither here nor there', explains why efforts to increase numbers of under-represented groups are futile as well as unnecessary, 'the fact is, the way of life in Parliament can't really be changed because it's in London and involves long hours... by definition, it doesn't suit some people. Like we discussed earlier on, logical debate doesn't suit some types of people'.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, his female Conservative colleague is antagonistic to feminist arguments that Parliament can be inhospitable to women, 'I'm not a feminist. I'm not a Harriet Harman... I would never want to be branded a feminist'.¹⁵⁵ She says she would not change anything about Parliament and defiantly accepts the working hours, 'yes I'm fine with those. Absolutely fine'.

Scottish Parliament: 'a deliberate desire not to be grand'

Attitudes amongst MSPs towards the absence of Westminster style ceremony in the Scottish Parliament provide a unique insight into a parliamentary culture that looks to be, and feels by its Members as, more inclusive. Similarly to the previous Chapter,

¹⁵² Interview 13 (19/01/10)

¹⁵³ Interview 14 (16/03/10)

¹⁵⁴ Interview 17 (20/07/10)

¹⁵⁵ Interview 27 (24/01/10)

there are no obvious categories of MSPs to create a typology – there is agreement amongst the vast majority that the Scottish Parliament is characterised by an absence of ceremony and a shared view this is a ‘good thing’. As can be seen from Table 4.3, this includes MSPs from all parties and those identified as active on women’s issues and those not so identified. Remarkably consistent reasons are given for the absence of ceremony – it is seen to reflect the newness of the Scottish Parliament, the founders’ intentions, the Scottish ‘character’ and the social background of MSPs – and is thought to result in an informal atmosphere within the Parliament and to accessibility for the public. Frequent comparisons made between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament reveal an overwhelming shared perception of the hierarchical nature of relations in the former contrasted to the less deferential nature of everyday relations in the latter.

Table 4.3 Absence of Westminster Style Ceremony a Good Thing?

	Agree	Disagree
Labour	11 (48%)	0 (0%)
SNP	7 (30%)	0 (0%)
Lib Dems	3 (13%)	0 (0%)
Conservatives	2 (9%)	2 (100%)
TOTAL	23 (92%)	2 (8%)
<i>MSPs identified as active on women’s issues and matched sample (sex differences).</i>		
	12x identified (9x women)	2x identified (2x women).
	11x matched (14x men)	0x matched (0x men).

Based on a typical perception of them as, ‘arcane stuffy traditions’,¹⁵⁶ most MSPs agree that the Scottish Parliament does not have Westminster style ceremonies. There is a shared perception across parties this contributes to greater informality

¹⁵⁶ Interview 50 (02/06/10). It must of course be noted that such views are only perceptions of Westminster and these may be prone to caricature (Mitchell 2010). Their value lies therefore in what they tell us about MSPs’ perceptions of the Scottish Parliament rather than of Westminster.

and a less hierarchical structure perceived to exist at Westminster. The absence of ceremony is repeatedly linked with the informality that characterises everyday interaction in the Parliament, and in turn to what is perceived as its accessibility to/for the public. For instance, an SNP woman elected in 2007 thinks the absence of ceremony is indicative of the more general parliamentary culture, 'I think it is a good thing because, some of that [ceremony] is not the real world and it's not the real world for your constituents. And it's just diversionary in my opinion... I think if you'd all that ritual and pomp that would create a barrier, sort of a "them and us" type scenario which a big strength to the Scottish Parliament is there isn't that.'¹⁵⁷ A Labour woman argues the informality of the relations between people is, 'fundamental to the character of this Parliament. It's about being less stuffy, less standing-on-ceremony, it is about being more practical, being more in tune with the electorate and we're not up on a pedestal. Scots don't like pedestals, they regard pedestals as things you can aim tomatoes at and they don't like people being venerated. So it's a much more down-to-earth culture.'¹⁵⁸

Moreover, there is a shared view that the absence of ceremony reflects the absence of hierarchy and deference shown to representatives that many perceive to exist in Westminster. A Liberal Democrat man comments 'I think we talk as much to the cleaners, the security staff as we do to the Ministers. Everybody talks on a fairly level playing field.'¹⁵⁹ The Scottish Parliament is also considered to be more inclusive to outsiders than Westminster, 'I think the signal sent out by Westminster is it's very much a club that you need to be part of to understand what's going on.'¹⁶⁰ An SNP man compares the Scottish Parliament favourably to a particularly damning critique of Westminster:

From what I've seen of Westminster, it's much more hierarchical and deferential. "You can't get above yourself in Scotland" because everybody knows everybody, it's the "I kent your father" mentality.

¹⁵⁷ Interview 53 (13/05/10)

¹⁵⁸ Interview 68 (08/06/10)

¹⁵⁹ Interview 60 (01/06/10)

¹⁶⁰ Interview 58 (16/06/10)

That's much more of what you get here. I think Westminster is anachronistic and I think it's imperialistic and when it's an English Parliament, which it will be, I hope the English give it a really good clear out.¹⁶¹

Many argue, moreover, that the absence of Westminster style ceremony was intentional – it reflected the preferences of the body charged with designing the Scottish Parliament and was a deliberate rejection of Westminster values in favour of accessibility, informality and functionality. For instance, a Labour woman with a prominent reputation for being active on women's issues, draws on the example of the sword holder for MPs, oft-cited to demonstrate the masculine nature of Westminster, 'it's a new Parliament, we don't have coat hangers or room for your swords here, it doesn't work like that and I think people were keen to ensure, in terms of the opening of Parliament or our procedures, that they were new and that we did things in a particular fashion. I think some of it relates to what happens in Westminster – a lot of the work at the very start was very much "no this is how we'll do it".'¹⁶² Another agrees:

It was a deliberate choice at the time when the Parliament was set up, that it would be not a place that was hide-bound, that it would be open, it would be accessible, it would be transparent. The Labour Government set up a structure within the Steering Committee which looked at the Standing Orders and in doing so they handed those decisions over to a broader group. Civic Scotland had been talking about a different way of doing politics which was distinct from Westminster. So an openness and transparency, a deliberate desire not to be grand, was written into the structures very early on. And so you didn't have ceremony.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Interview 50 (02/06/10). The particularly hostile attitudes of the SNP towards Westminster are also at play here.

¹⁶² Interview 52 (10/06/10)

¹⁶³ Interview 61 (18/05/10)

Many MSPs provide the same example of a debate over the dress and title of the Presiding Officer¹⁶⁴ to illustrate the prevailing rejection of the pomp thought to characterise Westminster. A Scottish Labour woman elected in 1999 remarks, 'I think the feeling at the start was it had to be new, we had to do our own thing rather than copy what's happened in Westminster. I understand that David Steel had a notion for robes for the opening of Parliament and was told "no you're not on, no robes"'.¹⁶⁵ Her colleague jokes that pomp would have been ridiculous, 'the Speaker in the Commons stops wearing a wig and we come in in judicial dress – it would have looked completely ridiculous. [laughter]'.¹⁶⁶ A male Liberal Democrat MSP argues that it was primarily Labour who opposed the ceremonial title and dress. He argues their concern was with the (rather large) leap he thinks they perceived between the pomp and the English class system:

The first Presiding Officer wanted to be called Speaker and he was quite keen, but in particular Labour said, "no, we're not sure about this talk. It's a load of rubbish all this stuff." And then it stuck and it's never been revisited. Why? I think it was to be seen to be a break with Westminster. With uniforms and all that, then pomp would start to develop and then you're back to an English class system if you're not careful.¹⁶⁷

The language used by MSPs who were involved in the campaign for devolution and were elected in 1999, the first elections for the Scottish Parliament, conveys a sense of ownership over the parliamentary culture. The chance to consciously shape the institutional norms, in their own preference, is expressed as a privilege and opportunity by a number of these MSPs, 'I guess I felt quite privileged to be here at the very start because we got to set the rules for the working environment and how to legislate in Scotland. I think it would be difficult after an election for new MPs to do the same thing because they're going into an established institution that's been

¹⁶⁴ Some apparently favoured 'Speaker', similarly to Westminster.

¹⁶⁵ Interview 52 (10/06/10)

¹⁶⁶ Interview 66 (24/03/10)

¹⁶⁷ Interview 59 (11/05/10)

there for hundreds of years. This is new so it's easier to start in the way you want to go on.'¹⁶⁸ Her colleague, another Scottish Labour woman, agrees that the creation of a new Parliament was a unique opportunity to shape the appropriate norms of behaviour:

I've been here since '99 and I think that we took a conscious decision that it wasn't going to be as formal as it is down the road. I mean, there are certain traditions, I might say, that you have to adhere to and that is if someone is addressing somebody else in the chamber, that you should call them by their full name. But you don't call them an honourable Member or friend. That is just, for us, just not acceptable.¹⁶⁹

Another Labour woman elected in the first Parliament similarly argues that the absence of established norms of behaviour provided an opportunity for different types of behaviour. She expresses the view that tradition can be used as an excuse for inaction and that efforts to introduce established norms from other parliamentary contexts were actively resisted, 'What it then meant politically was there's nowhere to hide. And I think one of the ways things were quite difficult the first few years, when people said to you, why can't you do such and such you couldn't say, "Well it's never been done that way." There's no tradition, nowhere to hide, no reference back to precedent, there was nothing, so it was all being developed. There were those who wanted to take the way in which other parliaments did business and tried to import it in, but there was a lot of resistance to that.'¹⁷⁰

Several MSPs claim newness is not the only reason explaining absence of Westminster style ceremony, arguing that the pomp does not sit well with Scottish culture. As noted above, there are comments about Scottishness peppering

¹⁶⁸ Interview 52 (10/06/10)

¹⁶⁹ Interview 72 (26/05/10)

¹⁷⁰ Interview 61 (18/05/10)

responses. These MSPs, then, perceive ceremonies as English, 'I think that's something to do with political culture in Scotland. A lot of us don't like deference, don't defer to others, don't want people to defer to us, and therefore you get a sense that although there's clearly a hierarchy, people don't operate within the hierarchy in that kind of way... We admire talent and ability, but we certainly don't think people should be uppity.'¹⁷¹ One female SNP member jokes that some MSPs might quite enjoy being referred to as an honourable Member, but argues, 'some of us, most of us, kicked against it. Some of it is about the Scottish psyche – we dinnae like pomp and circumstance – it's not something that impresses us in any way. So I think there's something about the Celtic psyche. There's also something about Republicanism.'¹⁷² Yet another uses local lingo to illustrate her point that the Scottish are not impressed by pomp:

There's a phrase in Scotland, "The high heid-yins" or people with high heads and I think there was a choice in the Parliament, "Did we want to have ceremonial trappings?" like, "Would our Presiding Officer wear something different when they were in the chair?" and we were absolutely against that. I think the first Presiding Officer quite fancied having his own suit but we just stood against that with the view that we wanted an accessible culture here.¹⁷³

Similarly, many respondents draw a link between the absence of Westminster style ceremony and the social backgrounds of its MSPs, particularly those involved in the construction of the parliamentary norms. Class and gender are prevalent in their views, though there are no obvious sex differences in attitudes. One Labour man argues that amongst the defining differences between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament is the class background of their Members, 'I'll be quite pretty blunt about this – we don't have here the tufting bufting Tory type. The kind of posh, privileged private school students who've been to all the kind of top schools now, you know.

¹⁷¹ Interview 61 (18/05/10)

¹⁷² Interview 63 (13/05/10)

¹⁷³ Interview 68 (08/06/10)

All of the parties have them, but clearly the Tory Party has them in abundance. You don't get that here as much.'¹⁷⁴ A Labour woman who claims to be unsure why the Scottish Parliament did not introduce ceremonies thinks it might have reflected its composition, drawing attention to the class and professional background of its Members. She emphasises that many MSPs' working experience was in the community rather than the stereotypical law background of MPs, 'the Members that had been elected, just seemed to me to come much more so from their communities. Everybody was new and they weren't lawyers that were used to wearing funny wigs and cloaks.'¹⁷⁵

Other Members, a Labour woman and man and an SNP man, spontaneously draw attention to the presence of women in explaining why the Scottish Parliament did not introduce Westminster style ceremonies. Here there is an assumption that women are particularly opposed to pomp which is perceived not only as elitist in terms of class but also as masculine. A Labour woman, particularly known for her activism on women's issues, argues that the people involved in the construction of the Parliament were opposed to the introduction of pomp because of the social assumptions contained within it. She identifies women as particularly opposed, even as she refers also to class:

I think it would be interesting to do an analysis of who came in in '99. I think there was a lot of women like myself, who were involved politically for a long time and we certainly weren't coming here to follow rules of debate that had been decided in private schools in deepest England somewhere, or indeed deepest Scotland. So there was a different kind of political freshness that came in with that and as a consequence I think of that, there is a distinct lack of deference in here.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Interview 55 (09/06/10)

¹⁷⁵ Interview 54 (03/06/10)

¹⁷⁶ Interview 61 (18/05/10)

A Labour man argues that the presence of women was crucial for the type of Parliament created:

Had those discussions in 1999 about the kind of Parliament we should be been made by a predominantly male group of people, even given that quite a lot of them would have been a relatively young group, it would have been more likely to produce outcomes that were more along the Westminster model. Whereas because from the very beginning we were something like 40 per cent female numbers, it just meant that the kind of pomposity that might have crept in was just much less likely to happen. Certainly from Labour's point of view, from our point of view and the discussion we had before the Parliament was created, we were keen to have a lot of women represented but also to have that kind of informal Parliament and those two things went together.¹⁷⁷

An SNP man makes a similar link between a masculine organisation and pomp, albeit more flippantly, 'most male birds in the animal world like great plumage and stuff, so in a male-dominated organisation I am sure we'd all love to go around in gorgeous gowns and things.'¹⁷⁸

At the same time as general criticism of ceremony, some MSPs draw attention to ceremony that has emerged or is beginning to emerge in the Scottish Parliament. This is an important point, because it suggests that opposition is not to ceremony per se, but opposition to Westminster style ceremony in particular. Bound up within this, and previously evident from the shared view amongst many that Westminster style ceremony sits uncomfortably with Scottish culture, is a perception of the Englishness of ceremony. In this way, MSPs are not only expressing their dislike of Westminster style ceremony, but also to the import of norms viewed as culturally alien and imperialistic. Three MSPs, two SNP and one Liberal Democrat, draw

¹⁷⁷ Interview 62 (03/06/10)

¹⁷⁸ Interview 57 (18/05/10)

attention to the procession down the Royal Mile held to coincide with the opening of the Scottish Parliament and argue this ceremony is more inclusive than that seen at Westminster, 'to an extent there's a wee bit of pomp and ceremony here, but I don't think there shouldn't be, you need a bit of pomp and ceremony I think at any parliament. You know, people do like that, to an extent, but it has to be in the context of still being accessible for the public. Hopefully we've got that right.'¹⁷⁹

An SNP man claims it could be argued the Scottish Parliament is still developing its own ceremonies. He emphasises that he has 'nothing against ceremony and rituals and customs', but argues against the imposition of Westminster's ceremonies, 'you should know why you're doing it, understand why you're doing it and develop your own. Effectively, the Westminster system is pretty much an alien system, it's based on English imperial system from what I can see. And Scotland's got to decide for ourselves whether or not we wish to do anything similar or not, and we'll develop ourselves.' He describes a ceremony that takes place to mark the opening of the Scottish Parliament as a, 'procession of the commoners', emphasising its more inclusive and family friendly nature:

At the start of parliamentary session, there is something called the ridings, and it's basically civic Scotland along with pipe bands and everything else and all the MSPs, we march down the Royal Mile as a procession, and we go round, and there's a big open day on the grounds of Holyrood Palace I think, they all march round there. And school children arrived from all over Scotland, civic Scotland, different ethnic groups, every MSP is asked to invite a local hero who then gets made a fuss of that day.¹⁸⁰

Not all MSPs approve of the absence of Westminster style ceremonies. Two dissenting views both come from Conservative women. They are in agreement that the 'zero' informal culture of the Scottish Parliament reflects, what they experience

¹⁷⁹ Interview 60 (01/06/10)

¹⁸⁰ Interview 51 (03/06/10)

as, the absence of camaraderie between representatives. There is a sense that these MSPs would like more dedicated spaces for them to socialise, 'in Westminster you've got that fantastic coffee lounge. You can get a scone and mix with people over it and here... well, the refectory downstairs, not a place that would attract you to go and spend time. So, I think there's a definite lack there, because there is this social thing of just, "How you doing?" "Oh, is that happening in your constituency?" All this informal thing, which is very much underrated.' She argues there was an unreasonable blanket rejection of all traditions associated with Westminster, using the examples of the voting system which provides an opportunity for informal socialising, 'antiquated though it is, does provide that opportunity to file through, to chat to people, to talk to the opposition, to have this little bit of banter' and the more informal language used in the chamber which she thinks, 'devalues some of the contributions'. She argues that the layout of the chamber, which incidentally failed to create more consensual debate, contributes to poor atmosphere in the chamber:

I think there's a lot of things like that were done to try and influence the way debate is carried out without any sort of good effect and I also think the chamber, the way we sit, there's a space between you and the person next to you, so there isn't the camaraderie and I definitely felt when we were all sort of squashed together and you were next to people, sometimes from other parties too it was much better debate, a much more spontaneous debate and better quality. So, I think that's something, although they're all squeezed on these antiquated benches at Westminster, that actually works.¹⁸¹

Her Conservative colleague, who describes the 10th anniversary of the Scottish Parliament as the, 'dullest, flattest affair', argues that ceremony has been rejected because of concerns about appearing extravagant to the public. She is critical, describing it as a 'dumbing down': 'It's perceived as extravagance, rather than

¹⁸¹ Interview 65 (01/06/10)

marking a ceremonial occasion. And I think that's been allowed to dictate, and I think we've responded: 'Oh, we'd better dumb it down, we'd better not get anything that costs money. Get it as cheap as possible, get a school choir that doesn't cost any money. And I think it's just a kind of sadder place for it. I couldn't believe that the 10th birthday, I sort of turned around and said, "Is that it? Is that it?".' She contends that, 'the public like a bit of ceremony' and is critical that the 10th anniversary focussed only on children, arguing the visitors who made a long journey for the occasion were disappointed by the lack of extravagance:

The 10th birthday was a flat, flat affair that was supposed to concentrate on all the ten years old that were born on the day of the Parliament. So there were all these children's games and children's things. And MSPs could go and find the children from their area and get a photograph taken. And the excitement of the day was for the children who were ten years old, which was fine, it wasn't for us, it was for the children. And I think a lot of the families kind of said, "Oh, I could go down and sit in the committee room and watch it on the screen." And, "Was that it? We've all got new outfits for this and it was pretty boring. Is that it all over?!"... They all kind of thought they were going to the Queen's garden party and it would be a really big momentous day. I was extremely underwhelmed by the whole thing! So goodness knows what the next one will be like.¹⁸²

Similarly to Westminster, the importance of ceremonies to MSPs' perceptions should not be overstated. A Labour MSP, who was previously an MP at Westminster, downplays the importance of the absence of ceremony. He agrees it is, 'more informal here', and identifies the use of first name terms in the chamber as an example. However, asked whether this generates a different atmosphere, he is doubtful and argues that partisan party politics is a more crucial dynamic, 'It should do, but...you see, my fundamental problem actually with Scottish politics is the

¹⁸² Interview 67 (16/06/10)

hostility between Labour and the SNP and so, all the kind of institutional ideals and formalities like calling people by their proper name, it doesn't really overcome that.' Probed further about the reasons why the Scottish Parliament did not introduce Westminster style ceremonies, he responds, 'It's quite superficial I think at one level, whether you have that or not... I think it's better what we have here, but I don't think we should get too carried away with it'. Indeed, throughout the interview, this MSP argues that the differences between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament should not be exaggerated because the party political system is much the same:

I suppose the fact of the matter is that it's a disappointment that the Scottish Parliament has not been different from Westminster in that regard, is that the party machine is still very influential and you sometimes worry that people have given up independent thought, that they may have independent thought but not express them. So I think the party line and the party machine is too powerful... I think the whole approach was supposed to be less adversarial, more cooperative and less hide-bound by party whips and virtue – that lasted about a week. I think in some ways the whipping system here is worse than in Westminster.¹⁸³

Indeed, many MSPs (from all parties, both those identified and matched) make similar points in arguing that emphasis on the differences between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament in terms of ceremony hide more important similarities between them. A Labour woman blames the transportation of some 'bad habits' from Westminster on Members who were previously MPs, 'the grand standing gesture politics that you see with Alex Salmond, at the moment. That is a kind of Westminster habit that's come into the Parliament, which frankly we could be better doing without.'¹⁸⁴ An SNP Member who explains the absence of ceremony by the Scottish Parliament's newness, nonetheless argues there, 'have been habits brought in from Westminster', such as: 'you often talk to people on the other side of the

¹⁸³ Interview 64 (02/06/10)

¹⁸⁴ Interview 54 (03/06/10)

chamber which is the confrontational chamber. I would say that's been brought with it. And a lot of the way the party system works is still inherited from the way Westminster looks at things. Although, we are elected by more proportional representation systems, it's still very much an adversarial model, in the chamber anyway.¹⁸⁵ A Labour man argues that new politics principles cannot and should not lessen the differences between parties:

You're still a party ideologue. You're part of a party with all its internal cultures. So I am, by any definition, core Labour. I'm quite a pluralist in my politics, but I'm core Labour. There's a set of values I really believe in that I think the Labour Party broadly based represents, and the idea that I wouldn't care about that because I need to seek some cosy consensus – I don't think it works like that.¹⁸⁶

Discussion

Attitudes towards parliamentary ceremonies tap into perceptions of more general parliamentary culture and are revealing of feelings of belonging amongst representatives at both Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. The importance of ceremonies to the experiences of representatives should not be overstated or considered deterministic – according to their own perceptions, the impact of ceremony on feelings of inclusion are negligible for some MPs and MSPs. However, views of ceremony demonstrate that, in Westminster, ostensibly neutral institutional norms contain social assumptions, particularly in terms of gender, class, race, age and professional background. While the MPs who provide a robust defence of parliamentary traditions are seemingly oblivious to socially exclusive norms contained within them, their more critical colleagues perceive Parliament as a masculine institution that favours the dominant classes. Attitudes amongst MSPs towards the absence of Westminster style ceremony in the Scottish Parliament are much less contested. However, they provide additional insight into perceptions of the Scottish Parliamentary culture as inclusive in terms of gender and class.

¹⁸⁵ Interview 57 (18/05/10)

¹⁸⁶ Interview 55 (09/06/10)

Moreover, debate over ceremony in both Parliaments feeds into wider debates about the distribution of power – of the executive vis-à-vis Parliament and of the power of political parties. In this way, the ‘cultural sideshow’ of Parliament guides us to more crucial dynamics of power.

At Westminster, attitudes amongst MPs provide support for the notion that parliamentary ceremony reflects the hegemony of the dominant social groups (Lukes 1979; Gluckman 1962; Bloch 2005). The interview data suggests that gender and class assumptions are particularly prevalent, although race, age and professional background also play out in the reasons given amongst those MPs who are critical of parliamentary ceremonies. The repeated description of Parliament as an exclusive public school or gentlemen’s club suggests that many MPs perceive Parliament as a masculine institution which reflects and reinforces the interests and tastes of the dominant classes. Many of the MPs categorised as critics do not identify with parliamentary traditions, describing ways in which they served to remind them of their marginalised status when they first arrived to Parliament. Some continue to feel excluded, where others have consciously adapted to the dominant norms, raising further questions about institutionalisation and whether they perceive adjustment as relevant to how effective they are as parliamentarians. Moreover, there is a view amongst many MPs who are critical of ceremonies that parliamentary culture is more familiar to and breeds a sense of entitlement in those MPs from privileged backgrounds.

Notwithstanding the light shed on some MPs’ perceptions of parliamentary culture, the importance of ceremonies on representatives’ feelings of belonging should not be overstated. A significant number of the interviewed MPs are ambivalent about parliamentary ceremonies. For so-called minimisers, ceremony is indeed a ‘cultural sideshow’ (Crewe 2005) – it is mere pomp, some of which might benefit from some reform, but does not need to be prioritised. However, while some MPs claim, or appear to be, indifferent towards ceremony, spending time at Westminster as a participant observer indicated to me that ceremonial aspects of Parliament are part and parcel of daily life for MPs and others. For example, shadowing an MP, who on

the basis of her responses to questions about ceremony during an interview was categorised a minimiser, suggested that ceremony affected her more than she described in the interview. In this example, the MP demonstrated particular dismay about learning the ceremonial aspects of a parliamentary position she was unexpectedly promoted to. This was evident from her comment, 'I feel like my job's changed over night. I need to find out the procedures... who is doing what and when' and, 'everyone else seems to know what they're doing already and I'm in there straightening my hair!'¹⁸⁷ Proficiently performing the ceremonial duties associated with her new role was a clear way in which this MP would be marked out as competent for it. So however indifferent, ceremonies do affect how MPs go about their jobs, and may in some instances and intangible ways, affect their perceptions of what they consider appropriate behaviour or strategy in that particular context (Bloch 2005).

Furthermore, even though many MPs view ceremony as irrelevant, the *contested* nature of attitudes towards parliamentary ceremonies is revealing. That some MPs see social assumptions contained in parliamentary ceremonies while others are oblivious suggests that parliamentary culture privileges some groups above others (March and Olsen 1989). The MPs who defend parliamentary ceremonies – the traditionalists – uncritically assume that *because* traditions are handed through the ages they are 'a good thing'. For one MP parliamentary ceremonies are 'visual representations' that symbolise the power of Parliament. However, despite the distinctively elaborate nature of Westminster ceremonies, this Tory male MP does not question *whose* visual representations they are or *what* messages they send (Lukes 1977). The uncritical acceptance and fondness of parliamentary culture amongst traditionalists, all of whom are Conservative MPs excepting one, suggests they are the culturally dominant group most at ease in this environment (Thelen 1999). This group can be regarded as somewhat advantaged because they do not have to construct a sense of entitlement either for their own feelings of belonging or in order to secure authority in the eyes of others (Liddle and Michielsen 2000). In

¹⁸⁷ The date of these fieldnotes is not included for reasons of anonymity.

this way, feelings of belonging may have implications for perceptions of efficacy (Duerst-Lahti 2002). Although the data collected here is unable to provide the necessary evidence for such a claim, this is one way in which cultural aspects of the institution – ceremony in this case – may affect how representatives go about ‘acting for’ women.

The gendered nature of parliamentary ceremonies is prevalent in how some MPs perceive them, however political party appears as a more critical factor influencing attitudes about parliamentary ceremony than do sex differences or whether the MP is known to be active on women’s issues compared to their matched counterpart. While the size and unrepresentative nature of the interview sample makes conclusions based on numbers necessarily tentative, the strongest attitudes towards parliamentary ceremony – traditionalists vis-à-vis critics – demonstrate the importance of political party in structuring attitudes. Those MPs who express affection towards ceremonies are Conservatives, excepting one Labour man, and only Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs are strongly critical. There are no strong patterns in terms of sex (or whether the MP is active on women’s issues) in attitudes towards parliamentary ceremonies. With the exception of traditionalists (who are mostly men), women and men (and those MPs who are known to be active on women’s issues as well as those who are not, the matched sample) constitute relatively even numbers of the categories. In other words, this data does not suggest that men and women necessarily perceive institutional norms so differently from one another. Rather, it suggests that representatives’ attitudes towards the institution are influenced by the intersection of social assumptions that are contained in the parliamentary culture and are strikingly communicated through parliamentary ceremony. Perceptions of parliamentary ceremony suggest that gender intersects strongly with class, along with race, age and professional background, in how representatives experience parliament.

Differences between those MPs known to be active on women’s issues and those who are not are, however, more strongly apparent from attitudes to the parliamentary sitting hours, suggesting that some aspects of parliamentary culture

are *experienced* differently by them. The sitting hours are perceived by many MPs as a parliamentary tradition rather than a practical way of working. Of the 19 MPs who are critical of the hours, 16 are MPs identified as active on women's issues and only three come from the matched sample. This includes Conservative women and some of those female Labour and Liberal Democrats, categorised as minimisers, who are ambivalent in their attitudes to ceremony. Parliamentary hours, which are described by those MPs who are critical of them as extremely long and unpredictable, emerge as a crucial factor determining the inclusion of women in Parliament. These MPs view the hours as unnecessary and as reflecting the preference of their colleagues who enjoy the clubby and collegiate nature of Parliament that such long hours foster. For many of these MPs, changing the hours is a high priority in making Parliament more inclusive for women. This finding is not altogether surprising – the attitudes of Labour women elected in 1997 towards the family unfriendly hours have been documented elsewhere, although note that these studies were some five or six years ago suggesting that feelings remain strong, and may be shared by subsequent intakes of women (Sones et al 2005; Childs 2004).

Furthermore, disagreement over the hours featured heavily in modernisation debates in the early years of the New Labour Government, becoming the epitome of the struggle between those who wanted to reform Parliament and those who opposed change (Power 2007; Lovenduski 2005). Debate over the sitting hours must therefore be understood in their political context – it is clear that reform of the hours, and of ceremonies and of the culture more generally, means different things to different parliamentarians. Previous studies indicate that so-called 'efficiency' reforms of Parliament, of which the sitting hours are an example, were perceived by some in the early years of the New Labour Government as an attempt by an excessively powerful executive trying to increase its dominance in passing legislation at the expense of an increasingly ineffective Parliament (Kelso 2009; Brazier et al 2005).¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Efficiency reforms, those which enhance the passage of legislation, primarily to the benefit of government, are contrasted to effectiveness reforms, those which enhance the ability of parliament to hold government to account. Though often conflated as part of a modernisation of parliament project, clearly there are inherent tensions between these agendas (Wright 2003).

However, for others, including many of these interviewees (primarily but not only women), the debate over the sitting hours was a family friendly issue – it was about addressing the practical needs of parliamentarians with caring responsibilities. Moreover, it was about the inclusiveness of Parliament for historically underrepresented groups – the hours carried symbolic importance in communicating who belongs as a representative (Childs 2008). The politicisation of the debate over sitting hours explains the apparent reluctance of Conservative women interviewees to strongly associate themselves with complaints made primarily by Labour women. Insights from interviews with MPs known to be active on women's issues, and those who are not, demonstrate that opposition to reform of the hours was not solely about fears of an increasingly powerful executive wielding more power, but also about a desire to keep Parliament the same, about ensuring it remained more special than an average workplace and about maintaining the clubby (and exclusive) nature of Parliament. At its most extreme, it reveals intolerance for changing the culture to accommodate the needs of the newcomers in 1997, including an unprecedented number of women with families.

Debate over the sitting hours also provides insight into the power of political parties in Parliament and demonstrates how parliamentary reform is guided by the interests of dominant groups (Kelso 2009). Opposition to reforming the sitting hours is perceived by many MPs, from all parties and including both women and men, as the reluctance of party whips, from all parties, to accede any power that might threaten their positional influence. Long hours are part of the clubby nature of Parliament which is in their interest to maintain – more contact time fosters camaraderie within political parties and allows whips to 'keep the bugger's ear'. In this way, parliamentary hours tap into broader features of parliamentary life at Westminster and provide support for historical institutional explanations of path-dependent change that reflects and reinforces dominant power structures (March and Olsen 1989; Thelen 1999), even if they would not normally be considered ceremonial or bound up in institutional power structures.

Similarly to MPs' views of Westminster, attitudes towards the absence of Westminster style ceremony in the *Scottish Parliament* reveal more general attitudes towards parliamentary culture and provide understanding of feelings of belonging amongst MSPs. The interview data demonstrates the almost unanimous approval of the absence of Westminster style ceremony. The two exceptions, who argue a blanket rejection of Westminster style ceremony was unreasonable, are both Conservative. This suggests that like Westminster, party impacts upon attitudes; however the sample is too small to make strong conclusions. The absence of Westminster style ceremony is thought to reflect a more general deliberate rejection of Westminster norms, the Scottish culture and social background of the composition of Parliament. It is believed to result in informality, accessibility to the public and a flatter structure than the hierarchy perceived to exist at Westminster; claims which are supported by the data collected through participant observation, where the opening vignettes to the Chapter and my fieldnotes repeatedly mention the informal atmosphere of the Scottish Parliament.¹⁸⁹ The outdated nature of Westminster style ceremonies helps to explain many MSPs' rejection of their suitability for a new Parliament, however their perceived Englishness, along with class and gender assumptions, are also crucial factors in why the vast majority of MSPs oppose them. This suggests that whereas MPs at Westminster see class assumptions, MSPs in the Scottish Parliament see both class and nationality, and particularly an anti-Englishness. This is confirmed by the MSPs who think Scottish specific ceremonies – rooted in the community and symbolising accessibility – are developing.

The Scottish findings also suggest that, similarly to Westminster, the significance of ceremony (or its absence) for the experience of representatives should not be overstated. Many MSPs argue that over-emphasis on the absence of ceremony conceals critical similarities between the Scottish Parliament and Westminster, particularly in the importance of party politics that influences identity and behaviour in both cases. Indeed, this finding provides support for the extant academic

¹⁸⁹ Fieldnotes: multiple occasions in both parliaments.

literature on the Scottish Parliament which emphasises that the tendency to over-exaggerate differences is based on a romantic view of the Scottish Parliament and a caricature of Westminster, 'despite efforts to be different from Westminster, and perhaps because of this, Holyrood is very much the child of Westminster. It is in its DNA.' (Mitchell 2010: 98). Accordingly, this suggests that although the Scottish Parliament is often presented as a clean slate – an opportunity to create new institutional norms that would replace the worst of Westminster's perceived elitist, stuffy and outdated traditions with more inclusive norms of equality and accessibility – the newness of a new institution is 'nested' in the institutions it emerges from and takes cues from (Mackay 2010). In other words, the Scottish Parliament may appear very different to Westminster, but executive dominance and strong party loyalty and party politics are much the same (Keating and Cairney 2009).

Nonetheless, attitudes towards ceremony amongst MSPs capture aspects of parliamentary culture that are *experienced* differently to Westminster culture. The interview data indicates that the Scottish Parliament is perceived as inclusive, in terms of gender and class, by a broader plurality of its Members. With the small exception of two, MSPs are not critical of the absence of ceremony in terms of their perceptions of belonging. Indeed, some argue its absence reflects and is a direct result of the high descriptive representation of women during the formation of the Scottish Parliament. In this way, the institutional culture does not appear to privilege men over women, or a culturally dominant elite, and reflects the more pluralist and representative nature of the groups, in terms of gender and class, involved in its construction (March and Olsen 1989).

Chapter Conclusion

Westminster parliamentary culture looks to be less inclusive in terms of gender and class than the Scottish Parliament. Although in both cases it is clear the importance of parliamentary ceremony should not be overstated, using ceremony as an analytical lens has made it possible to capture important new ways in which the Scottish Parliament is different from Westminster. Interview data reveals that aspects of Westminster parliamentary culture are contested – while some MPs

express strong affection for its ceremonies, others are extremely critical, arguing the ceremonies are indicative of the cultural hegemony of white, upper-class men who historically dominate the institution. Gender and class norms are particularly evident in the frequent descriptions of Westminster as a gentlemen's club or exclusive public school, although race, age and professional background also play out. Attitudes amongst MSPs towards the absence of Westminster style ceremony in the Scottish Parliament are much more homogenous and suggest the parliamentary culture is more inclusive of its Members. There is a shared perception amongst many MSPs that this not only reflects the newness of the Scottish Parliament, but also the Scottish culture and the social composition of its membership, particularly in terms of gender, class and professional background.

Furthermore, and though difficult to measure and quantify, participant observation data demonstrates that parliamentary ceremony is an integral aspect of Commons life. Subsequently spending time as an observer at the Scottish Parliament reveals this is not the case. As the opening vignettes to the Chapter suggest, Holyrood is characterised by a marked informality in respect of the relations between MSPs and others. While this cannot of course be attributed only to the absence of ceremony, it is difficult to imagine such informality in the context of Westminster style pomp. Using ceremony as an analytical lens therefore has much in common with and enhances historical and feminist approaches to institutions. It provides a way of understanding how representatives perceive the institution and, because of the social assumptions perceived within parliamentary ceremonies, gets particularly at feelings of belonging and exclusion.

Chapter 5: Ritualised to Conform?

It is five minutes before noon on a Wednesday and MPs are rapidly filing into the chamber to watch the weekly exchange between the Prime Minister and the leader of the Opposition. Chatting and laughing amongst themselves, many MPs appear uninterested in the Questions to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which are drawing to a close. The atmosphere in the viewing gallery is hushed as visitors, crammed onto long benches, are waiting to spectate on the most well known weekly Commons exchange. The chamber looks almost like a television screen from the gallery – high above, and with a large pane of glass separating us; proceedings below seem far away. Our movements are strictly overseen by the stern looking parliamentary officials who, dressed in their ceremonial attire, immediately balk at the visitor who rises, even slightly, from their seat to get a better view. The Commons benches very quickly fill to capacity and MPs begin to sit on the steps that run between the benches, then filling up the standing space at the rear of the chamber. Men's domination of the chamber is strikingly visible from the rows of dark suits, punctuated by only the occasional brightly coloured outfit worn by a woman, the majority of whom sit on the Labour benches. Questions to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland wrap up as the Speaker announces the beginning of Prime Minister's Questions. A Conservative backbencher starts the session by asking the ritualistic first question, 'If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 16th December'. Harriet Harman, the Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the House, is filling in for Gordon Brown this week. She rises to pay tribute to fallen British soldiers, as is customary for the opening of PMQs when someone has been killed on duty, and is gratified with a deep 'hear, hear' from MPs that resonates around the chamber, before explaining that the Prime Minister is in Copenhagen. The respectful silence paid by MPs dissipates as a supplementary

question on the British Airways Cabin Crew strike is asked. After she answers, noise builds even louder as William Hague, who is filling in for the Leader of the Opposition, rises. Cheers from the Conservative benches boom as his name is called by the Speaker, respectfully pause as he joins in paying tribute to soldiers, and soar again as he asks his first question. Fast-paced back and forth exchanges between Harman and Hague produce cheering, laughing and heckling amongst MPs who appear to be enjoying the show. The pitch of the exchange gets louder and more aggressive, culminating when Harman attacks 'climate change deniers' in the Tories. Loud cheers from the Labour benches reverberate around the chamber. The session turns to the Liberal Democrats' slot. The usual groans that meet the leader of the Liberal Democrats are heard but somewhat muted this week as Vince Cable fills in for Nick Clegg. The chamber quietens as backbenchers are given their weekly opportunity for questions. MPs shift in their seats, though the hum of chatting and laughing keeps the atmosphere alive and makes loud delivery necessary. The tone of questions varies between Members, along with the confidence with which they ask them and the extent to which they sound rehearsed. A request for an early election and a joke about Tweedledum and Tweedledee by Conservative backbencher, Nigel Evans MP, is met with loud guffaws by his own side. Though this is batted away with a fast response by Harman, the cheers from her own side are quieter. At an end, the Speaker calls for Order and the chamber swiftly empties.¹⁹⁰

It's 11.50am on Thursday morning and I am in the viewing gallery overlooking the debating chamber in the Scottish Parliament. Around me, the packed gallery waits expectantly for the weekly popular question time between the First Minister and the leaders of the opposition parties. Starting to fill with MSPs, the chamber is busy and

¹⁹⁰ Fieldnotes, Westminster, 16/12/09.

the final stage of the debate on the Public Services Reform Bill is lively. Although speeches are timed, providing an orderly feel to debate, the atmosphere is spirited and participation robust. A disagreement between an SNP and Labour frontbencher arouses table thumping and shouting amongst Members, getting louder in response to a party political point made by the Minister. Perhaps because of the proximity to the chamber floor, and no equivalent glass separating the viewing gallery, watching debate as a visitor feels closer and more involved in the Scottish Parliament than in Westminster. I quietly ask a security guard standing beside me whether it is always this partisan, and he tells me, 'of course, it's just like Westminster – not because they necessarily disagree but because it's party politics'. The debate is winding up. It is now 11.58am and the atmosphere builds in imminent anticipation of First Minister's Questions. Members that have wandered out during the debate start to return and take their seats. The awaited session begins as the leader of the largest opposition party, Iain Gray, rises: 'To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day?' Although a set-piece question, the response is not non-contentious – cheering and noise rise immediately as Alex Salmond, the First Minister, delivers a rabble-rousing answer about spending his day doing analysis of the UK budget which he presumes will not be in Scotland's favour. It is extremely atmospheric – there is shouting, clapping, more boisterous table thumping and the supportive hum of 'hear, hear' amongst Members. An insult flung at Salmond by Gray, 'you're a numpty', causes the Presiding Officer to intervene – curtly reprimanding him, 'I will not have accusations like that made across the chamber, please withdraw'. Unabated, the angry exchange resumes and Salmond is soon told off for making a similarly inappropriate insult. Despite the disagreement, the atmosphere is jovial – MSPs appear to be enjoying the exchange and are laughing, heckling and chatting amid the shouting. Annabelle Goldie, the leader of the Scottish Tories, rises. Authoritative in her stature and sturdy in her delivery, she continues the adversarial and party political

exchange, albeit with the somewhat quieter participation of her fellow MSPs. In an amusing replication of Westminster norms, groans meet the leader of the Liberal Democrats, Tavish Scott, as he rises to take his turn at questioning the First Minister. The momentum dies under Scott – the loud jeering and clapping dries up as MSPs rapidly appear to lose interest in proceedings. Total calm is restored to the chamber as backbenchers take their turn at asking questions and remains until the Presiding Officer declares, ‘That ends First Minister’s Questions, we now move onto...’. MSPs immediately begin to file out of the chamber.¹⁹¹

Introduction

Behaviour in the debating chambers of Westminster and the Scottish Parliament provide interesting cases for comparison of (gendered) norms and their inclusiveness. As can be seen from the above vignettes, an adversarial style of interaction characterises behaviour in both. In the first case, feminist scholarship has demonstrated how this adversarial, ‘cut and thrust’ style of exchange, in the Westminster chamber can be experienced as exclusionary to women and, or femininity. The debating style, and criteria for ‘good’ performance, contains masculine norms which reflect the historic dominance of white, public-school, Oxbridge educated men (Lovenduski 2005). The chamber is the most public arena where women have to ‘manage’ their femininity – the masculine style of interaction privileges men and masculinity and is more difficult for women to perform (Puwar 2004). Empirical studies have provided evidence in support of this argument – interviews with women MPs and analysis of participation in Commons debate demonstrate that many women perceive debate as macho and are less likely to participate aggressively (Childs 2004; Shaw 2002). Moreover, there are frequent reports of explicitly sexist behaviour, particularly following the large influx of women in 1997 (Sones et al 2005).

¹⁹¹ Fieldnotes, Scottish Parliament, 25th March 2010.

Feminist analysis of masculine behaviour in the Westminster chamber contrasts to the aspiration of a consensual way of 'doing politics' claimed for the Scottish Parliament. Evident from the final report of the Scottish Constitutional Convention was the deliberate rejection of the adversarial politics perceived as characterising Westminster, 'from this process we have emerged with the powerful hope that the coming of the Scottish Parliament will usher in a way of politics that is radically different from the rituals of Westminster; more participative, more creative, less confrontational... The Parliament we propose is much more than a mere institutional adjustment. It is a means, not an end' (cited in Brown 2000: 542). This points to the conscious design of an institution intended to foster consensual behaviour and reveals a notion that, 'an open, simple and modern style of operating' would encourage better participation for its Members (Brown 2000: 449).

However, ten years on there is consensus in the academic literature and media that behaviour in the Scottish Parliament chamber looks much the same as Westminster; certainly in terms of party posturing, ritualistic heckling and adversarial exchange (Mackay 2010; Mitchell 2010; Keating and Cairney 2009; McMillan 2009).¹⁹² At Westminster, most gender and politics studies were carried out when the majority of women were relative newcomers to Parliament meaning there is a need to update these studies and incorporate the views of their male colleagues. Gendered analysis of participation in the Scottish Parliament has been more limited (Mackay 2010); with just one early study looking at whether men and women have different performing styles (Henderson 2005). Based on the academic consensus, and observation, that adversarialism characterises behaviour in the Scottish Parliament chamber, there is accordingly a need to examine gendered norms and inclusiveness of parliamentary debate here.

This chapter, then, further builds on a feminist institutionalist approach to political institutions by employing multi-disciplinary literature on *ritualised behaviour* in order to better understand gendered norms in parliamentary debate. It is distinct from the

¹⁹² Also confirmed from participant observation on multiple occasions in both parliaments.

previous chapters in looking at perceptions of a more everyday aspect of Commons life than its buildings (Chapter 3) or occasions more obviously ceremonial (Chapter 4). It contends that behaviour in the debating chamber of these Parliaments is a good example of ritualised behaviour, according to a working definition of that which is, 'rule-governed, prescribed and symbolic' (Crewe 2005)¹⁹³ and argues that insights from the literature on political ritual promise to provide greater understanding of behaviour therein. Following Steven Lukes, ritualised forms of behaviour are considered to be based on the preferences of the authoritative groups whose interests they reflect (Lukes 1977). Conceptualising of behaviour as ritualised therefore speaks to the primary concern of feminist institutionalists by providing insight into institutional power structures and the ways in which these are maintained through unquestioned conventions and everyday practices (Mackay 2008; Waylen 2009). More specifically, this chapter examines the 'cultural assumptions' contained in ritualised forms of behaviour; looking particularly at how the parliamentary debating style and behaviour in the chamber is gendered and how this impacts upon representatives' perceptions of belonging (Duerst-Lahti 2002: 385).

Attitudes towards performing in the two chambers provide support for the findings in the previous chapters by demonstrating that, similarly to parliamentary buildings and ceremony, perceptions amongst MPs are highly contested, while there is greater homogeneity amongst MSPs. The data suggests that behaviour in both Parliaments is ritualised according to institutional norms of partisan politics and therefore reflects institutional power structures based on political parties. Moreover, ritualised forms of behaviour speak to cultural assumptions contained in the institutional culture in terms of gender, class and professional background. Despite basic similarities in the ritualistic adversarialism observed and reported in Westminster and the Scottish Parliament chambers, the data indicates that gender (and class) norms are experienced differently by representatives in their respective Parliaments. A clear difference is that while a majority of MPs identify ways in which ritualised behaviour

¹⁹³ See Chapter 1 for more detailed definition of ritual and how it is distinct from ceremony.

in the Westminster chamber is exclusionary on these axes, this is less the case amongst MSPs in the Scottish Parliament.

Two Swords Apart

Westminster debate is perceived as exclusionary in terms of gender and, or class by a majority of interviewed MPs. The aggressive, and dominant, style of interaction in the chamber is perceived as masculine and thought to reflect the Oxbridge Union debating style. Over half, 26 of the 39 MPs who discuss the topic, perceive gendered, and, or class norms in debate. Seventeen are particularly critical on these grounds and argue it should be reformed. Only six MPs explicitly deny the validity of arguments that the style of debate privileges men and masculinity. As can be seen from Table 5.1, political party and sex (and representatives known to be active on women's issues and those who are not) intersect in attitudes towards parliamentary debate in a more complicated way than seen in attitudes towards parliamentary buildings and ceremony in the previous Chapters. This is evident when MPs are categorised once again into three broad groups: *traditionalists*, *minimisers* and *critics*.

Traditionalists acknowledge ways in which it is said parliamentary debate contains and privileges masculine assumptions, but seek to counter these arguments. These MPs provide support for an understanding of debate as ritualised and can be viewed as enforcers of ritualised practices. Party and sex are prevalent here – of the six MPs who acknowledge and defend gendered norms in debate all are Conservative men, except one Conservative woman and one Labour man. *Minimisers* are a mixed bunch but share willingness (or enthusiasm) to adapt to the dominant style of parliamentary debate. Two sub-types of minimisers are discernible: those who perceive masculine norms in debate but argue women should adjust and those who do not explicitly address gendered (or class) norms. According to a ritualised analysis of behaviour, these MPs might be viewed as adapting to dominant forms of behaviour, consciously in the first instance and sub-consciously in the second. Attitudes of minimisers are structured by sex (and whether the MP is known for being active on women's issues) more obviously than party. *Critics*, who constitute a plurality of respondents, perceive Commons debate as reflecting and privileging

dominant power structures. The vast majority are explicitly and critically aware of masculine and, or class norms in debate. Party differences are the starkest pattern: 13 Labour, four Liberal Democrats and no Tories are critical. However, there are also sex differences in the grounds on which they criticise – more women than men claim to feel negatively affected by gendered norms and criticism based on other factors, such as class, is made nearly entirely by men.

Table 5.1 Typology of MP Views on Performing in the Chamber

	Traditionalists	Minimisers	Critics
Labour	1 (17%)	6 (37.5%)	13 (76%)
Conservative	5 (83%)	6 (37.5%)	0 (0%)
Lib Dem	0 (0%)	4 (25%)	4 (24%)
Total	6 (15%)	16 (41%)	17 (44%)
MPs identified as active on women’s issues and matched sample (sex differences).			
	1x identified (1x women)	12x identified (10x women)	7x identified (7x women)
	5x matched (5x men)	4x matched (6x men)	10x matched (10x men)

Traditionalists: ‘Logical debate doesn’t suit some types of people’

A small minority of MPs interviewed, six in total, recognise ways in which parliamentary debate is said to contain masculine norms in terms of the qualities required for ritualised adversarialism and sexist behaviour directed at women, but seek to counter these arguments. Traditionalists, so-called because they defend parliamentary debate as it is, are made up of four Conservative men (all matched, in other words not publicly known to be active on women’s issues), one Conservative woman and one Labour man (also from the matched sample). Similarly to the MPs who defend the parliamentary hours (see Chapter 4), these MPs address and dismiss

the arguments put forward by colleagues about the inhospitable nature of Parliament for women. These MPs provide support for the notion that behaviour in the chamber is (positively) ritualised in their argument it should be based on convention according to established informal norms. They can be viewed as enforcers of ritualised practices, evident from their, sometimes scathing, criticism of colleagues who they perceive to deviate from their esteemed debating style. Ritualised practices of heckling and catcalls such as 'reading, reading'¹⁹⁴ may be viewed as amongst the 'symbolic strategies used by different groups, under specifiable structural conditions, to defend or attain power *vis-à-vis* other groups' (Lukes 1977: 69).

One Conservative male MP argues the claim of sexism in the chamber should not be overstated because it ignores other childish behaviour. He spontaneously raises the issue when talking about women's issues being pigeon-holed, 'I don't think there's a large element of chauvinism – you'll often hear it boil down to chauvinistic comments like 'I don't like what she's wearing today', but if you sat in the chamber and listened, you'd hear an array of comments taking the mickey out of that MP's accent or what a woman is wearing'.¹⁹⁵ Another MP, who strongly defends the 'Oxford and Cambridge Unions' debating style of the Commons, is intolerant of MPs who do not conform to the conventions which, he argues, have developed for good reason. Here, this MP taps in on an understanding of ritualised behaviour as that which is based on unwritten rules, 'there are conventions about debating in the chamber that have arisen over hundreds of years of practice for very good reasons.' Later in the interview, in a separate discussion about whether parliamentary hours should be changed to accommodate MPs with caring responsibilities (he argues they should not), he spontaneously raises participation in debate, 'like we discussed earlier on, logical debate doesn't suit some types of people'.¹⁹⁶ The context of the remark, during a discussion of whether there should be greater numbers of women

¹⁹⁴ Participant observation data and interviews 11 (30/01/10), 5 (18/01/10), 14 (16/03/10), 27 (24/01/10). This is not to argue that only MPs categorised as Traditionalists participate in ritualised practices of heckling.

¹⁹⁵ Interview 2 (29/06/10)

¹⁹⁶ Interview 17 (20/07/10)

in politics, suggests that the ‘some types of people’ who do not perform according to his expectation of good debate are women. He does not problematize what ‘logical’ debate means despite acknowledging it suits ‘some types’ of people more than others.

A sole male Labour MP is sympathetic to the claim that ritualised behaviour in the chamber contains masculine norms, but nonetheless defends the confrontational atmosphere because of his personal enjoyment of it. He spontaneously argues the chamber is off-putting to women, ‘I think in the House of Commons, because of that aggressive, finger-pointing, shouty atmosphere, a lot of women just think “sod this, this isn’t what I signed up for”’ and offers an (essentialist) account of why: ‘men are more aggressive by nature. They’re more egotistical, they like showing off a bit more maybe. They like a scrap’. Despite his understanding and personal sympathy with female colleagues he knows do not enjoy the barracking, he would not want to see behaviour change and thinks there are other potentially more effective strategies for increasing the number of women in politics, ‘I want to see more women in politics, but... I don’t want to say, let’s change the structure of the House of Commons, let’s make it less adversarial in order to attract women.’¹⁹⁷

Similarly, a Conservative male MP who agrees that, ‘more women than men are put off by the adversarial atmosphere’, is less sympathetic in his argument that performing in the chamber is a craft that can, and should, be learned. He is critical of ‘women or otherwise’, he thinks have not tried to do this and is particularly scathing of the habit of reading from notes – another example of behaviour that can be considered ritualised in that it is not a formal rule, but rather based on convention and largely enforced by ritualistic heckling by MPs:

Notwithstanding the fact it’s challenging and all of that, there’s absolutely no excuse for not working at improving your public speaking. I far from claim to being brilliant at it, but it’s not some impossible art –

¹⁹⁷ Interview 36 (24/02/10)

it's a craft, it's practice and women or otherwise who don't bother to improve, who sit there with sheets of paper near their nose, are most irritating. Even when it's a short two-line question, they read it. Whether the "culture shift" from that 1997 intake actually resulted in an improvement in the quality of the chamber – I doubt – judging by how many of them are so poor 13 years on.

Asked directly whether the chamber can be a sexist environment, this MP, somewhat reluctantly, replies, 'I'm not the right person to ask – women say they have had experience of that, so I think the answer has to be yes.' However, he continues by restating his intolerance for the women he perceives as not adjusting to the dominant forms of debate, emphasising they are quite capable of doing so:

But again, if you stand up and you've got a very soft voice, and you're a woman, and you don't *bother* to sit where there's a microphone, and you learnt your bloody thing, you haven't bothered to master how to communicate – and then it *makes* people shout 'reading' at you, and intimidate you – then the sisterhood can look a bit upset, and say there's bullying of this female MP. But actually, women are more than capable of holding their own in the chamber and anyone who doesn't bother to prepare properly and think about what they're doing and treat the chamber or the electorate with respect, has got whatever's coming in my view.¹⁹⁸

A similar idea that women should adjust to the environment of the chamber is articulated by the one Conservative woman MP, who in Chapter 4 made explicit her antagonism towards feminist arguments that Parliament can be inhospitable to women, 'I'm not a feminist. I'm not a Harriet Harman... I would never want to be branded a feminist'. She expresses contradictory views about adversarial behaviour in the chamber. Asked directly whether she thinks it can exclude people, she replies:

¹⁹⁸ Interview 14 (16/03/10)

No I don't. There are lots of women who don't want to be politicians because they find that – it's like two footballs teams and they're not interested in football. So I think from that perspective, they're not attractive to women, but even if there were more women there I don't think that would change. So although it prohibits women coming into the fold, women being there won't change it.¹⁹⁹

Despite her initial rejection of the contention adversarial debate can be exclusionary, she continues to argue that lots of women are put off politics by it, using the analogy of a football match to make her point. However, she emphasises that greater numbers of women would not change the style of interaction. Alternative readings of these comments are possible here – it might be that, after greater thought, this MP accepts that the adversarial nature of the chamber can be exclusionary. However, and similarly to her defence of parliamentary hours in Chapter 4, her defiant tone suggests that such interactions should not be changed to accommodate women. Her denial that more women would make a difference to the style of debate may be part of a preference for gender-neutral analysis that does not differentiate between men and women, but also to do with her wider opposition to feminist arguments in favour of greater numbers of women in Parliament.

Minimisers: 'You're a big girl, an MP, stop whinging!'

Those MPs categorised as minimisers are characterised by their willingness to participate according to the dominant style of debate, though some perceive it to contain masculine (and class) norms. These MPs provide further support for an understanding of behaviour in the chamber as ritualised according to dominant norms and are prepared to enact these, though with varying levels of reluctance and consciousness. Altogether, 16 MPs fit this category, though two relatively distinct groups of minimisers are discernible – the first are those MPs who view the dominant style of debate as masculine but are prepared to adapt and the second are

¹⁹⁹ Interview 27 (24/01/10)

MPs who uncritically enjoy debate without explicitly addressing masculine norms. Sex differences are more obvious amongst the first group of minimisers than party: four Labour, two Conservative and three Liberal Democrats perceive masculine norms and argue for adapting. Women (all identified as active on women's issues) constitute a majority of these MPs: seven MPs identified as active on women's issues (though six women) and two matched MPs (three men). In other words, more women than men perceive masculine norms in debate and participate accordingly. MPs from all parties enjoy debate and do not explicitly address its masculine nature: four Conservative, two Labour and one Liberal Democrat. This group contains more MPs identified as active on women's issues than those who are matched: five compared with two (four women and three men), suggesting that many MPs who are active on women's issues (and are women) consider themselves unconstrained by ritualised norms that are perceived as masculine by colleagues.

The MPs who address the masculine nature of debate, but demonstrate willingness to play the game and, or argue others should do the same, can be said to be knowingly enacting ritualised forms of behaviour (Bloch 2005). They point to the tension, or at least consciousness, of 'managing femininity' in a masculine environment (Puwar 2004). For instance, three Labour women, familiar with the arguments amongst colleagues about the gendered norms of debate, are empathetic but think people should learn 'how to deal with it'. Interviewed before the 2010 election, all of these MPs were currently or previously part of the Government, suggesting that parliamentary experience might affect how Members experience the chamber. A former Junior Minister argues that women can struggle to be heard in the chamber but that they should develop strategies to overcome problems of acoustics:

Not everybody is born with a very clear voice, but you *can* do something about that. One of the things I was told very early on was to sit somewhere you can speak straight into a microphone – I think that's particularly important for women who have more problems with their voices... You can get voice training to increase your resonance – I think

that's what women suffer from the most. It does surprise me – some of my female colleagues, actually some of my male colleagues as well, have quite squeaky voices – and you just think, well speaking in the chamber is part of your job, it's what you do, so go and get yourself some voice training.²⁰⁰

A former Cabinet Minister is more sympathetic but emphasises she held her view of performing in the chamber even as a newcomer, 'it can be scary, a frightening place to be, but actually – this seems a bit harsh of me to say this, but I did say it 12 years ago – I think you should be able to withstand that'.²⁰¹

Women from other political parties also acknowledge gendered norms in the dominant style of debate, however, and similarly to their qualified criticism of parliamentary hours (see Chapter 4), there is a marked difference in the content and tone of their critique. Two Conservative women think that the chamber can be a more difficult environment for women. One spontaneously raises the issue when asked about what makes a good performance, 'I think one of the challenges to women in Parliament is that the general view of what makes a good performance is one that's very aggressive. And that's the media's view of what makes a good performance.' Although she acknowledges the claim that the aggressive nature of the chamber might be off-putting to women, she emphasises this is not the case for her, 'I think it's a pretty fair chamber by and large.'²⁰² Her colleague agrees debate is adversarial but argues this is necessary. Asked directly whether the chamber can be a sexist environment, she thinks it can, 'I think it's aggressive and therefore more associated with being male, so yes that may be possibly be true. [pauses] Do I disapprove? No I don't. I think the dynamics of the chamber are part of the testing of ideas and argument.' Probed whether women can participate in adversarial behaviour in the same way as their male colleagues, she pauses before reflecting:

²⁰⁰ Interview number not provided for anonymity.

²⁰¹ Interview number not provided for anonymity.

²⁰² Interview 34 (28/01/10)

You know, I think that *is* a subtle disadvantage for women. I think women aren't as naturally, that's a sexist comment as well, but I think women aren't as naturally aggressive and testosterone charged, and they tend to handle things in different ways. I think that's part of *subtle* discrimination, for want of a better word, here in Parliament – the way it works tends to play to male traits more than female traits. There are more risks, because if your voice becomes shrill, you will immediately become ridiculed.²⁰³

So although not initially disposed to gendered critique of parliamentary debating, this Conservative MP thinks, after a pause, that the dominant style privileges a masculine manner.

A Liberal Democrat woman speaks at greater length about how parliamentary culture may be off-putting to historically under-represented MPs and discusses how overwhelmed and isolated she felt when she was first elected. She describes the heckling in the chamber as 'awful' and recounts the 'horrible jeering from the Tory men' the first time she asked a parliamentary question. Moreover, she argues that the style of intervening in debate is more difficult for women and thinks women sometimes get picked on. Nonetheless, she is stoic in her argument that she got used to it and thinks that newcomers should not tamper with the system, 'you can't have someone coming straight in off the streets, not understanding the place, trying to change it. I think, why did you come here if you immediately wanted to start changing the place? It's a bit like a woman who marries her husband and immediately starts trying to change him to something completely different'. She is not, then, sympathetic to complaints about the adversarial nature and thinks people should harden up, 'some of the Labour women had some sexist comments from Tory men, actually it isn't right and it shouldn't be allowed, but that's life and you put up with it – you're a big girl, an MP, stop whinging!'.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Interview 20 (04/03/10)

²⁰⁴ Interview 32 (21/01/10)

Finally, lest we assume that all MPs do not like the atmosphere in the chamber, seven MPs uncritically enjoy parliamentary debate and do not discuss masculine (or class) norms. These MPs might be viewed as enacting dominant forms of behaviour more obviously (Bloch 2005). Two Labour women, both then Ministers, are particularly noteworthy for their enjoyment of performing in the chamber. One describes feeling the pressure of parliamentary occasions in her role as Minister, 'it's sort of like trying to be a duck – serene like a duck, gliding across the surface. Meanwhile your feet are going like mad underneath. It's almost a good thing not to be too complacent because you do have to be on your toes', but clearly feels confident:

Usually as a Minister, you do know more than other people, but you need to make sure you're on top of that because anything can happen. Particularly in the chamber because you can't say "stop, give me five minutes". I always have a sense of trepidation, not so much intimidated, because I feel quite confident and quite like public speaking, and I like to think on my feet. But that's also because I can store a lot of information in my head so I can usually find some fact to throw back at them. I even amaze myself sometimes!²⁰⁵

Another acknowledges it 'doesn't suit everyone', but evidently relishes and is good at the combative approach:

I like the adversarial nature, I like standing up 'two swords length' away from the Tories and having a right go. I like seeing the whites of their eyes! [laughter]... You need to be able to tub thump – the thing is to get the people behind you cheering, so have a go at the other side! Then the noise is going to be behind you, not coming at you... Everybody cheers! Your side's winning – it's a game – you're going to win or you're going to lose a debate. You might as well recognise for what it is.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Interview number not provided for anonymity.

²⁰⁶ Interview number not provided for anonymity.

Critics: 'What works is a macho, tub-thumping, loud voice – boom boom boom'

Critics, the largest singular group, constitute 17 of the 39 MPs who discuss performing in the chamber. This group perceive parliamentary debate as privileging and reinforcing dominant power structures. The majority identify norms contained in parliamentary debate explicitly and critically, specifically in terms of gender and class. Unlike the group above, they neither enjoy, nor argue that MPs should adjust to the dominant style of debate. Some consciously, and reluctantly, participate in ritualised forms of behaviour, while others claim to reject it altogether. Similarly to traditionalists and unlike minimisers, party is the starkest pattern amongst the critics: only Labour and Liberal Democrats are critical of parliamentary debate because of the way in which they perceive it to privilege the dominant power structures (13 Labour and four Liberal Democrats). However, there are sex differences (correlated by MPs identified as active on women's issues and those matched) in how these MPs criticise parliamentary debate. Male critics are more likely to base their criticism on factors other than gender, such as class; while more women than men claim to feeling negatively affected by masculine norms in debate. Of the six MPs who criticise based on factors other than gender, five are male. Relatively equal numbers of men and women offer a gendered critique of parliamentary debate (six women and five men), however four of the five MPs who claim to feeling personally affected by masculine norms are women. In other words, gender mediates experiences of debate, in a negative way, more for women than for men amongst the MPs interviewed. This provides support for an argument that dominant forms of ritualised behaviour in the Commons chamber privilege masculine norms that are more difficult for women to enact.

Three MPs, all Labour and all men, are explicitly critical of class norms in debate, arguing that an innate sense of entitlement provides greater confidence for MPs privileged in terms of class, educational and professional experience. For these MPs, ritualised debate may be gendered, but class is foremost in how they perceive, and or, experience it. One argues, 'you see the way the barristers get up, or the public

school kids, and there's no doubt these traditions and rituals are roadblocks to general plurality of representation. And culturally, they are dominant, Cameron and Osborne just get up and they're born to rule.' One uses the same language and addresses both class and gender as factors in how people fare in the chamber, 'people who feel like they were "born to rule", for want of a better phrase, are less likely to be fazed by that. I think we still do get people who don't like it, we had an MP in '97 – I think her name was Jenny Jones – and she only did one term and packed it in, she just really, really didn't like it. She didn't like the way people spoke to one another and got rude and bolshy.'²⁰⁷ Another argues, 'you don't have debating clubs in comprehensive schools – that kind of clever clever sixth form stuff tends to be something that posh boys are bloody good at because they've done it before'. Although this MP clearly articulates how parliamentary debate privileges particular MPs in terms of class, he might more appropriately be categorised as a minimiser because of his denial this was a disadvantage to *him*, 'you work with the weapons you've got and if people start throwing big words at you, you just look them up and throw longer ones back. It's like a sailor complaining about the sea, you work with the environment you operate in'.²⁰⁸

Some MPs who are critical of parliamentary debate perceive it as reflecting the internal parliamentary power structures; demonstrating that factors other than social assumptions contained in debate, such as their relationship with their party, mediate how some Members experience the chamber. Two Labour MPs, both known rebels in the party, make similar points about executive dominance and party loyalty when asked about the chamber. A Labour woman, who expresses enthusiasm for the 'theatre and drama' of the chamber is critical of what, she perceives, is the diminishing value put on parliamentary performance. She taps into debates about the centralisation of government under New Labour and argues that party loyalty is valued more than good oratory, 'Tony Blair wasn't that interested in Parliament. One of the first things he did was to cut PMQs to one day – I think he disliked Parliament.

²⁰⁷ Interview 15 (19/03/10)

²⁰⁸ Interview 33 (05/07/10). This MP is categorised a critic rather than minimiser because of his condemnation of the 'cupping' gesture made by Tory men, see below.

They were more interested in promoting people who would follow the party line than good speakers. More than that, they were wary of people who had face in the movement of their own. Like Clare Short because she had been in the party for a very long time and had a base in the movement of her own – they were very wary of that. They liked people who could be relied on to do what the party says.’²⁰⁹ Her male colleague similarly addresses the tension between some Labour backbenchers and the Labour Government. Asked whether the chamber can be a hostile environment, he argues it can be ‘horrible’ due to the heckling from Members of his own party, ‘you get up and you’ve got crowds of New Labour MPs who are really hostile and are muttering comments the whole time you’re speaking.’²¹⁰

A gendered critique of the chamber is made both in terms of the qualities needed for adversarial debate and in respect of the sexist behaviour that they perceive to occur in the chamber. These MPs collectively express a dislike for the ritualistic yah-boo politics they perceive as characterising Westminster debate, drawing particularly on the symbiotically adversarial occasion of Prime Minister’s Questions to make their point. For instance, a Labour woman is unequivocally critical of the ‘bear pit’ atmosphere of the chamber, ‘I find it quite difficult really. It’s Prime Minister’s Questions today and that’ll be like a bear pit and that’s a very difficult time to get your views across because it’s so intense, and hectic, and so antagonistic. I think facing each other in the chamber is a recipe for conflict and I don’t think that’s particularly helpful.’ Asked whether the adversarial environment is exclusionary, she argues that it is and that it puts her (and others) off participating, ‘yes I do – lots of people don’t join in. I want to go in and make some points today, but you think, do I really want to go in and join all that?’²¹¹ A Liberal Democrat woman similarly contends the antagonistic nature of debate does not bring out the best in people, ‘the objective seems to be to rubbish the points whether they’re good or bad’.²¹²

²⁰⁹ Interview 8 (12/01/10)

²¹⁰ Interview 38 (05/07/10)

²¹¹ Interview 21 (03/02/10)

²¹² Interview 23 (11/01/10)

A Labour woman, elected in 1997, describes how hostile the chamber felt as a newcomer. She claims the chamber is off-putting to new Members generally, but is particularly daunting to women who, she argues, are not socialised to enjoy the dominant style of behaviour, 'it felt like everybody in there knew everything and you knew nothing and knowing about the antics and how they'll interrupt you to put you off is very daunting to a new Member – of whatever gender, but particularly to women because we don't do that stuff, whereas blokes do! That confrontation and cat-calling isn't natural to women, we're not taught how to do it, it's not part of our makeup at all so it's quite hard to get over the fear of that, because it is designed to put you off'.²¹³ A Liberal Democrat woman agrees that women find it particularly difficult to participate in the adversarial style of debate. She also addresses class and the professional background of Members as factors for inclusion, 'in terms of women in particular, for women who haven't had a political background, it is difficult to participate in that adversarial style in the chamber – in order to intervene on someone who may or may not let you – and it's embarrassing, because the whole public school system works on humiliation'.²¹⁴

Women are not alone, however, in disliking adversarial behaviour in the chamber, three male MPs, including those not known for their activism on women's issues, express similar criticism. One addresses gender explicitly, 'it's dark and dingy and you've got the two sides opposing one another very much in gladiatorial battle with everyone shouting at each other. I think for many people, not just women but perhaps more so women, the macho environment in there is quite unattractive. It's actually deeply unattractive to me'.²¹⁵ Two dislike the adversarial atmosphere, though do not mention gender directly. A male Liberal Democrat talks about Government whips standing by their benches, 'baying at you, trying to put you off what you're saying'.²¹⁶ A Labour man provides support for the notion that enacting ritualised forms of adversarial behaviour is important for establishing oneself in the chamber:

²¹³ Interview 5 (18/01/10)

²¹⁴ Interview 23 (11/01/10)

²¹⁵ Interview 28 (23/06/10)

²¹⁶ Interview 30 (22/02/10)

I think that does make difficult for quietly spoken, considered and consensual politics. That doesn't mean to say there aren't quietly spoken and consensual speeches made and certain Members are listened to anyway because of their status built up over years, but it does make it more difficult for people to make their mark unless they're prepared to compromise with the rumbustious, yah-boo culture that dominates the place.²¹⁷

It is therefore not only, or all, women who are critical of ritualised forms of debate in the Commons, however it appears that Westminster's traditional gender regime privileges a historically dominant masculinity that is easier, because of cultural expectations of behaviour, for men to perform (Lovenduski 2005). A female Labour former Cabinet Minister argues that, while some of the characteristics required for a good performance in the chamber, like being on top of your brief are gender-neutral, some of the qualities necessary for the more adversarial occasions are more difficult for women to perform, 'on the big occasions and sometimes on the smaller ones, what works is a macho, tub-thumping, loud voice – boom boom boom, the classical rhetorical devices and all of that. And although not all men are comfortable with that and some women are, by and large, most of my women colleagues, like me, hate it'.²¹⁸ Furthermore, there is a perception amongst many interviewees that sex can influence how MPs are treated in the chamber. A Labour woman, interviewed when Labour were still in government, describes behaviour in the chamber, quite simply, as, 'aggressive and quite sexist', and argues the opposition always 'have a go' at Yvette Cooper because, 'she's small, pretty, female and married to another Cabinet Minister'.²¹⁹

Apparent sexist behaviour is not only noticed by women MPs. A Labour man, who describes himself as, 'not the newest of new men', recalls being 'genuinely shocked'

²¹⁷ Interview 37 (27/07/10)

²¹⁸ Interview 29 (06/01/10)

²¹⁹ Interview 10 (12/01/10)

by 'the cupping of the breasts movement that men on the other side used to do'.²²⁰ A male Labour colleague spontaneously identifies behaviour in the chamber to support his contention that parliamentary culture continues to implicitly discriminate against women. Speaking on the day of the day of a Budget Debate in 2010 he perceived differential reactions to George Osborne and Harriet Harman in the chamber, 'George Osborne was heard, not deferentially by the opposition benches, but was heard and he was listened to and that was clear. When Harriet Harman got up to speak as leader of the opposition, you could hardly hear what she was saying because she was jeered and interrupted throughout'. This MP attributes this incident, and behaviour in the chamber more generally, to implicit discrimination in terms of gender and also class:

I think a minority of Members act in an overtly discriminatory way and a larger majority behave in a way that they wouldn't necessarily see as discriminatory, but in fact it is. Whether it's shouting people down or creating an atmosphere or an underlying commentary. Which is what they might be familiar with from the institutions they've been to, but is not a comfortable atmosphere to a lot of other people. That might not just be women, also other people who don't have the same public school background they do, but it probably does disproportionately affect women.²²¹

Nonetheless, there is a prevailing view amongst these MPs that behaviour in the chamber has got better over time. Many of the Labour women elected in 1997 who make a gendered critique argue that explicitly sexist behaviour is less prevalent than it once was. This indicates a view that crude sexism, considered acceptable by some of their colleagues when women were newcomers to Parliament, is no longer acceptable. Many of these MPs, some directly and some implicitly, make a link between their presence and a change in institutional norms of behaviour. For instance, one comments, 'I think it's improved. I think when I came here it was very

²²⁰ Interview 33 (05/07/10)

²²¹ Interview 1 (22/06/10)

sexist. In 1997, a lot of women came and it certainly was a totally male club that we came into'.²²² Her colleague agrees that overtly sexist behaviour is less common than when she was first elected in 1997²²³ and another talks about sexist behaviour in the past tense, 'that's about bullying – what happens in bullying is the bully will pick on someone they think is vulnerable. There are various sorts of vulnerabilities which are beyond the pale, and until very recently, your gender or sex wasn't beyond the pale of vulnerability, because some opposition MPs were so insensitive to gender politics that they didn't get that it was beyond the pale'. Moreover, she does not wish to overstate its importance, 'it's just bullying behaviour, and frankly, most MPs have experienced *more* bullying behaviour'.²²⁴

Indeed, the majority of the MPs who are critical of masculine or sexist norms of behaviour do not claim to feel personally intimidated. There is a sense that many MPs who were daunted by the chamber when they were first elected have become more confident or were helped by their professional background before becoming an MP. A Labour woman jokes that she is, 'blessed with a loud voice' and her bad eyesight means she cannot see the opposite benches.²²⁵ Her colleague argues her barrister background meant she was used to the way the chamber operates,²²⁶ and another thinks that wit is important, though she argues women's 'gendered upbringing' means they find it harder to be witty in public.²²⁷ Asked whether the chamber is a fair environment, a Liberal Democrat woman emphasises that she is no longer fazed, having learned to 'handle' it, but argues the adversarial style does not bring out the best in people and indeed encourages sexist behaviour, 'that's a difficult one because the world is as it is and you just have to tackle it – fair and unfair aren't really the right terminology. By the time you get to Parliament if you are intimidated you've really just got to get over it. What I do think is it's not the most productive and doesn't bring out the best and it relies on relationships with history and sexism and the superiority of men, which held people back – both men

²²² Interview 21 (03/02/10)

²²³ Interview 5 (18/01/10)

²²⁴ Interview 12 (26/01/10)

²²⁵ Interview 5 (18/01/10)

²²⁶ Interview 10 (12/01/10)

²²⁷ Interview 12 (26/01/10)

and women. There are some boorish men and some sexist men, but there are in every walk of life, it's just here that type seems to be encouraged.'²²⁸

A Consensual Chamber?

According to many of the MSPs interviewed, behaviour in the Scottish Parliament chamber is not dissimilar to that described by MPs (and observed) in Westminster.²²⁹ These findings provide support for the observation that partisan party politics predominates in both Parliaments – most certainly in terms of behaviour in the debating chambers – and does so at the expense of the founding aspiration of consensual politics associated with Holyrood (Keating and Cairney 2009; McMillan 2009; Mitchell 2010; Mackay 2010). Moreover, they provide support for the argument that ritualised forms of behaviour are developing in the Scottish Parliament. Adversarial rituals, comparable to Westminster, reflect the dominant power structures along political party lines.

Similarly to the findings in the previous Chapters, attitudes amongst MSPs are more homogenous than those seen at Westminster. As a result, and as with the previous Chapters, an equivalent typology of traditionalists, minimisers and critics is not obvious. This in part reflects the newness of the Scottish Parliament – traditionalist is unlikely to be a relevant category when the institution and its norms were so recently formed. Nonetheless, distinct groups are evident on particular issues. Five MSPs, who might be labelled *optimists*, claim to a greater or lesser extent that the founding principle of consensual politics has played out in the chamber. However, the vast majority of MSPs can be considered *sceptics*: 15 more or less agree that the founding aspirations of consensual politics do not play out in the chamber and provide support for the notion that despite intentions to the contrary, ritualised forms of adversarialism have and are emerging. As can be seen from Table 5.2, they include a balance of MSPs identified as active on women's issues and those who are

²²⁸ Interview 23 (11/01/10)

²²⁹ Fieldnotes: multiple occasions in both parliaments. These observations are supported by media coverage of behaviour in both chambers.

matched – nine compared with six. This perception is, furthermore, shared by MSPs from all parties – six Labour, six SNP, two Liberal Democrats and one Conservative.

Table 5.2 MSP Views of Consensual Behaviour in the Chamber

	Optimists	Sceptical
Labour	2 (40%)	6 (40%)
SNP	0 (0%)	6 (40%)
Lib Dems	1 (20%)	2 (13%)
Conservatives	2 (40%)	1 (7%)
TOTAL	5 (25%)	15 (75%)
<i>MSPs identified as active on women’s issues and matched sample (sex differences).</i>		
	3 identified (3 women)	9 identified (6 women)
	2 matched (2 men)	6 matched (9 men)

Optimists: ‘We don’t do that in here’

A small group of MSPs who can be labelled *optimists*, are positive that consensual politics play out in the chamber at Holyrood. They provide support for the argument that the creation of a new institution was an opportunity to create ‘new’ forms of ritualised behaviour – in this case, there was a deliberate rejection of Westminster-style confrontational politics (Megaughin and Jeffrey 2009). A Conservative man offers support for this aspiration, ‘we certainly don’t have the immediate four yards apart business of Westminster, of people looking straight across at a Member opposite sort of thing.’²³⁰ A Labour woman differentiates behaviour in the Scottish Parliament from what she perceives to occur in Westminster (though it should be

²³⁰ Interview 70 (27/05/10)

noted that she does not have firsthand experience of being an MP). She argues a conscious decision was taken to be less formal in the terms of address, conveying an underlying expectation this would play a role in interaction between participants, 'I've been here since '99 and I think that we took a conscious decision that it wasn't going to be as, certainly as formal as it is down the road'. She contrasts the light-hearted nature of banter in the Scottish Parliament with the more aggressive behaviour she thinks occurs in Westminster, 'I've been in the House of Commons when someone from Scotland was speaking and they shout from the other side, 'English, please, English please,' kind of thing. And so you get that, not only a derogatory comment, but that's just not nice. It's just not the way and we don't do that in here. Even if somebody makes a mistake and they mispronounce a word and they laugh, and everybody laughs, then somebody might shout out the right pronunciation. But it's all done in a kind of jovial way. It's not nasty, no, no, it's not.'²³¹

Sceptics: 'Have you watched First Minister's Questions?'

The vast majority of interviewed MSPs, can be best understood as sceptical of the success of the founding aspiration that debate in the Scottish Parliament should be consensual. Fifteen of a total 20 MSPs who discuss the topic explicitly perceive behaviour in the chamber as adversarial. They provide support for the argument that the Scottish Parliament takes its cues from its parent institution it was so determined to reject (Mitchell 2010). The ritualistically adversarial behaviour which has developed in the chamber reflects the social arrangements between participants (Gluckman 1962) and similarly to Westminster, divisions are predominantly along partisan lines. Although there is majority support for the claim that ritualised adversarialism characterises behaviour in the Scottish Parliament chamber, it nevertheless appears that Scotland's rituals do not contain the same gender (or class) norms experienced by a significant number of MPs.

²³¹ Interview 72 (26/05/10)

Many MSPs use the example of First Minister's Questions as obvious evidence of the adversarial nature of the chamber. For instance, a Conservative woman raises FMQs when asked whether the semi-circular seating layout encourages consensual debate: 'I don't think so. I don't think it matters at all. You only have to listen to First Minister's questions to realise that that's the case.'²³² Similarly, asked whether debate is less adversarial in the Scottish Parliament than at Westminster, a Liberal Democrat responds:

Have you watched First Minister's Questions? You can draw your own conclusions. I mean you'll know the history of the chamber at Westminster, the benches at Westminster are opposite facing and they are deliberately the distance they are apart because it is effectively two sword lengths. Most modern debating chambers within parliaments, if not quite semi-circular, are to some extent not facing. Does it work? No, not really. I mean First Minister's Questions, like Prime Minister's Questions, is a piece of theatre, that's all it is and it hasn't curtailed the most stupid aspects of what is supposed to be intelligent debate from taking place.²³³

Sceptics vary in their perceptions of adversarialism in the Scottish chamber; some emphasise that the importance of the most adversarial occasions such as First Minister's Questions should not be overstated. Indeed, one Labour woman dismisses it: 'despite the obvious antagonisms in set pieces like FMQs', in arguing that the proportional electoral system forces parties to work across the board.²³⁴ A Labour man calls FMQs 'theatre' and argues the real work is done in committees, 'I always say to folk, when you go to a show, the stage is the theatre, but nothing can happen on there that hasn't been built through committees.'²³⁵ His colleague agrees that the committee system makes the Scottish Parliament distinct from Westminster. Asked whether the ideal of consensual politics has played out, he argues it is

²³² Interview 65 (01/06/10)

²³³ Interview 56 (01/06/10)

²³⁴ Interview 66 (24/03/10)

²³⁵ Interview 55 (09/06/10)

important not to judge the Scottish Parliament by adversarial occasions in the chamber:

First Minister's Questions is the kind of main focus in the week for the differences between the parties because the leaders of the parties take each other on in the main debate on a weekly basis. So if you were to judge the Scottish Parliament by First Minister's Questions, you wouldn't judge it to be very different from Westminster, but there are some important differences.²³⁶

Whilst not making a claim that First Minister's Questions is representative of more general behaviour in the chamber (or other parliamentary sites), the frequency with which it is employed as an example is indicative of the majority view held amongst MSPs of debate as adversarial.

Some interviewees directly compare the adversarial style in the chamber to that seen at Westminster, showing how ritualised forms of behaviour can be transported between different institutional contexts. An SNP man spontaneously identifies behaviour in the chamber, along with the party system, as amongst the 'habits' taken from Westminster, 'a lot of the way the party system works is still inherited from the way Westminster looks at things. Although, we are elected by more proportional representation systems, it's still very much an adversarial model, in the chamber anyway. So I think some of these things have been imported from Westminster.'²³⁷ Another argues that dominant conceptions of politics as adversarial inevitably impact upon how politics is practised in the Scottish Parliament and that this reflects the necessary reality of political competition between parties. Asked whether the founding aim of consensual politics has played out, he responds:

It's very difficult when your experience of the political process over generations, over 100 years or more, has been the Westminster system

²³⁶ Interview 62 (03/06/10)

²³⁷ Interview 57 (18/05/10)

which is adversarial, to then just say, “Oh well but we’re not going to do that”. So, I don’t think that happens overnight. I actually don’t know that we would benefit from, you know, there’s grounds for consensus and where there is consensus there will be consensus, and that’ll be pretty clear. But where people disagree with one another, why shouldn’t they disagree with one another? Why shouldn’t they, if they feel the need to, disagree with one another forcefully? That’s surely the nature of political exchange, that’s the nature of debate, that’s the nature of people with different ideas.²³⁸

Other MSPs agree that adversarial politics in the chamber is necessary in the context of a party political culture and reflects substantive differences between the political parties. A Labour man argues the chamber is where the battle-lines between political parties are drawn, ‘the chamber has to be where party positions are being articulated. So at noon today you’ll see very bitter division between Labour and the SNP in particular’. He challenges the idea ritualistically adversarial politics is necessarily bad, ‘there’s a set of values I really believe in that I think the Labour Party broadly based represents, and the idea that I wouldn’t care about that because I need to seek some cosy consensus – I don’t think it works like that.’²³⁹ His female Labour colleague, an MSP with a strong reputation for being active on women’s issues, agrees. Asked whether the ideal of consensual politics plays out in the chamber, she argues, ‘I’m not regarded as a very consensual politician so I’m not the right person to ask. People say, “Oh it’s tribalism.” At one level it is, because people don’t agree and we should be relaxed that people are going to argue because they don’t agree.’ However her distinction between good ‘robust debate’ and rude behaviour, which is ‘a very old kind of politics’, may be an implicit reference to, and distancing from, Westminster:

I just think that politics and debate should have an edge to it and you should be tough with people. You don’t need to be rude and obnoxious.

²³⁸ Interview 58 (16/06/10)

²³⁹ Interview 55 (09/06/10)

You can be robust in your argument without being offensive or rude. And I think sometimes people think that shouting and bawling in itself is sufficient. I think putting people down or dismissing them is a very old kind of politics. Putting somebody down in a sense that you challenge an argument is fine, because that's about ideas, but if you just say, well you're a stupid person and you're rubbish, which is a bit of what First Minister's Questions has become.²⁴⁰

Others are more critical of adversarialism, arguing that the behaviour in the chamber is indicative of the failure of the Scottish Parliament to live up to its founding aspirations. A Labour man spontaneously uses behaviour in the chamber to support his assertion that the differences between the Scottish Parliament and Westminster are not as great as intended. He argues that similarities in terms of the strong party systems are evident in the chamber, and not only in the obvious example of antagonism during First Minister's Questions, 'when you watch First Minister's Questions you think there's precious little difference to be honest. I mean, the theory was that it was going to be less of an adversarial political system, and perhaps at certain times and in certain places that is the case, but it would be dishonest to say that it is not adversarial. Obviously in First Minister's Questions, but in many debates and in the kind of postures that parties adopt towards each other, I think it's a bit disappointing in that regard, so the difference is not as big as it should be.'²⁴¹

The influence of political party on attitudes towards behaviour in the chamber is evident from a couple of Labour MSPs who blame Alex Salmond for what, they perceive, is the increasingly antagonistic nature of debate under the SNP Government. A Labour woman blames the transportation of some, 'bad habits of Westminster' on 'the Members that came from there'. Asked which bad habits, she identifies antagonistic behaviour in the chamber, 'the grandstanding gesture politics that you see with Alex Salmond, at the moment. That is a kind of Westminster habit

²⁴⁰ Interview 61 (18/05/10)

²⁴¹ Interview 64 (02/06/10)

that's come into the Parliament, which frankly we could be better doing without.'²⁴² Her colleague agrees that, as First Minister, Alex Salmond sets a more aggressive tone. Similarly, she thinks his style may be a result of his experience at Westminster, 'the First Minister makes a point of not answering questions, of doing people down, of blustering – there's a different tone this session. And of course he's an MP. There's a few that are or have been MPs, but he definitely takes that yah-boo thing too far.'²⁴³

Exclusion and Inclusion

Nonetheless, and unlike Westminster, debate in the Scottish Parliament is not perceived, on such a scale, as exclusionary in terms of gender or class. This suggests that although ritualised forms of behaviour may appear similar to Westminster, they do not necessarily contain the same gender norms or are experienced in the same way by its Members. Two categories of MSPs can be discerned in terms of feelings of belonging – a small number who feel excluded and those who claim to, or appear to, feel included in parliamentary debate. As can be seen from Table 5.3, there are no obvious patterns in terms of either party or sex (or identified/matched) – Members from all parties occupy both categories. Though slightly more MSPs identified as active on women's issues claim to feel excluded (three-one), their overall number of four is too small to be sure this is broader pattern. Moreover, it is balanced by the (greater number of) MSPs who do not experience exclusion from ritualistic forms of behaviour in the chamber: this group contains more MSPs identified as active on women's issues than those who are matched (six-three).

Table 5.3 MSP Feelings on Whether Debate is Exclusionary/Inclusionary

	Excluded	Included
Labour	1 (25%)	2 (22%)
SNP	1 (25%)	3 (33%)

²⁴² Interview 54 (03/06/10)

²⁴³ Interview 66 (24/03/10)

Lib Dems	1 (25%)	2 (22%)
Conservatives	1 (25%)	2 (22%)
TOTAL	4 (31%)	9 (69%)
<i>MSPs identified as active on women's issues and matched sample (sex differences).</i>		
	3 identified (2 women)	6 identified (5 women)
	1 matched (2 men)	3 matched (4 men)

Exclusion: ‘I don’t like Punch and Judy’

A small number of MSPs, four in total, provide explicit examples of the ways in which adversarial behaviour in the chamber can be exclusionary. Three of the four MSPs who claim to feel excluded are those identified as active on women’s issues. There are no patterns in terms of party – an MSP from each of the parties interviewed expresses feelings of exclusion. A male Liberal Democrat, identified as active on women’s issues, dislikes the adversarial behaviour, ‘I don’t like “boo-sucks-rah”, I don’t like Punch and Judy’ and argues he prefers to use humour rather than, ‘the aggressive hectoring you often see in there’.²⁴⁴ An SNP woman describes experiencing the particularly adversarial occasions as daunting, ‘when it’s packed, it can be intimidating. I still find it intimidating just now on certain occasions’, and blames it on the heckling, ‘there are a certain minority who heckle if you get into trouble so your mistakes won’t go unpunished, and I think that can be quite difficult’. Asked directly whether behaviour in the chamber could be changed to make it easier for her personally to participate, she responds, ‘there should be less heckling. The Presiding Officer should really stamp on that more and he doesn’t, he’s quite weak sometimes the way he deals with them.’²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Interview 56 (01/06/10)

²⁴⁵ Interview 69 (17/05/10)

A Conservative man, labelled an optimist in his view that debate is generally consensual, nonetheless describes the chamber as, 'a generally daunting environment'. He refers to his educational background in explaining why he does not particularly enjoy performing in the chamber, 'it's not a natural thing for me to do. I didn't come up... with my background. I didn't come up with any great experience in debating. I didn't attend university'. Without explicitly articulating it as such, he addresses class norms contained in the style of debating, describing how he dislikes the system of intervening in debate which he thinks, 'are the skills that youngsters develop through school, university and so on. On a personal basis, I've never felt totally happy in that situation.'²⁴⁶ An SNP man thinks there is 'macho-ness' in being able to take interventions, although he does not report to feeling excluded on this basis.²⁴⁷ A Labour woman refers more explicitly to gender and class norms when expressing her dislike for ritualistic adversarialism, 'I don't particularly like it and I've never liked all the banging desks stuff. You know, if somebody makes a good speech, I'll clap. I don't go desk banging. I don't like it. It's just a bit too public schoolboy.' She too describes feeling uncomfortable with making and taking interventions, particularly at the beginning, 'I used to find quite daunting, just picking the right moment to leap to your feet, because you try to badger your way into somebody else's speech.' Despite this, she argues she finds it much easier now and argues it is necessary to get used to it, 'I do find it a wee bit daunting but you do have to grow bit of a thick skin. Otherwise you just really couldn't survive, you know?'²⁴⁸

Inclusion: 'we have been known to heckle'

However, a greater number of members claim to, or appear to, enjoy debate and do not perceive it as exclusionary. This includes more MSPs who are identified as active on women's issues compared with those who are not – six compared with three (though five women and four men). There are no obvious patterns in terms of party: three SNP, two Labour, two Lib Dems and two Conservatives enjoy debate. This

²⁴⁶ Interview 70 (27/05/10)

²⁴⁷ Interview 57 (18/05/10)

²⁴⁸ Interview 54 (03/06/10)

group includes an MSP categorised as an optimist, which is perhaps unsurprising given her perception of debate as consensual, however the rest of those interviewed MSPs who are notable for claiming or appearing to feel included in debate are those categorised as sceptics. In other words, they do not experience, what they perceive to be the adversarial style of debate or the ritualised forms of behaviour necessary to participate in it, as exclusionary. Perceptions of the chamber as a non-intimidating environment are evident from an MSP who talks about his 'light-hearted' approach to the chamber,²⁴⁹ and another who jokes about his willingness to participate in debates on which he knows very little about.²⁵⁰ A Liberal Democrat, asked whether he enjoys debate, argues he does, 'very much so, yes. Being a smaller party, we're all basically spokespeople. Therefore you get quite a lot of practice speaking in the chamber'.²⁵¹ An SNP man, asked the same question, agrees and implies it is a generally non-threatening environment, even to people who 'seem reserved', 'I enjoy it, because there's an element of show off. It's strange, because there's a lot of people who seem reserved, but when you see them in the chamber they become a completely different person, some just love it and become showmen, or show-women, when they are in there.'²⁵²

Moreover, and unlike Westminster, few people think that ritualised forms of behaviour in debate are exclusionary to women in particular. A Labour woman, with a prominent reputation for being active on women's issues, spontaneously identifies the debating style as evidence of the effective mobilisation of feminist demands in the Scottish Constitutional Convention. She addresses both gender and class norms in her argument that women who had been politically active in the community before devolution were not prepared to abide by debating rules they associated with elite schools, 'I think there was a lot of women like myself, who were involved politically for a long time and we certainly weren't coming here to follow rules of debate that had been decided in private schools in deepest England somewhere, or indeed deepest Scotland, so there was a different kind of political freshness that

²⁴⁹ Interview 59 (11/05/10)

²⁵⁰ Interview 57 (18/05/10)

²⁵¹ Interview 60 (01/06/10)

²⁵² Interview 50 (02/06/10)

came in with that.’²⁵³ She addresses the aggressive style of debate, joking, ‘we have been known to heckle’, but defends it on the grounds that there are substantive differences between the parties that ought to be reflected in debate and does not describe it as exclusionary.

Two women MSPs (who it should be noted have never been MPs and so are merely speculating on Westminster debate), argue that although robust, debate in the Scottish Parliament compares favourably with that of Westminster. A Labour woman argues that the Scottish Parliament chamber is less daunting, ‘it’s very relaxed. It’s a much easier place to get up and speak in’²⁵⁴ and an SNP woman argues that although raucous, behaviour in the Scottish Parliament chamber is less macho, ‘it can get rowdy sometimes which is sometimes really good, sometimes not really good if all the rowdiness is directed at you. But it’s not got the same, sort of, testosterone type aggressive, boorish type of debating that goes on. We’re quite sociable and very respectful of each other as well.’²⁵⁵ A Labour man, who is known to be active on women’s issues and was previously an MP, emphasises that the differences between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament are not as great as popularly supposed. He claims the chamber may be a more inclusive environment in terms of women; however his belief in this claim should be not be over-exaggerated – it is less than emphatic, ‘I think there are differences; I just think there’s a danger of overstating them. But having said that, there are probably quite significant differences that may actually benefit women in terms of more family-friendly hours, *slightly* less intimidating environment, probably, in debates and in questions.’²⁵⁶

Discussion

At both Westminster and the Scottish Parliament, ritualistic adversarialism in the chamber provides insight into the dynamics of power and social relations within these political institutions (Gluckman 1962). Findings from both case-studies provide support for an understanding of behaviour as ritualised according to the party

²⁵³ Interview 61 (18/05/10)

²⁵⁴ Interview 72 (26/05/10)

²⁵⁵ Interview 53 (13/05/10)

²⁵⁶ Interview 64 (02/06/10)

political culture in that there are clear expectations of behaviour, many of which are based on convention, that look to reflect the preferences of the dominant groups (Bloch 2005). In particular, ritualised forms of behaviour reflect the culturally dominant groups in terms of gender and class (Lukes 1977). This is evident from interview data collected at Westminster, where the dominant style of debate is perceived to contain masculine and, or class norms by a majority of MPs interviewed. It is also supported by behaviour, discussed below, observed while shadowing MPs. Put crudely, ritualised norms appear to be policed by traditionalists, adapted to by minimisers and reluctantly enacted or rejected by critics. Despite its relative newness and contrary to the aspirations of its founders, it appears that ritualised adversarialism has developed in the chamber of the Scottish Parliament. However, interviews with MSPs suggest these forms of ritualised behaviour do not contain the same masculine (and class) norms as Westminster and are experienced as less exclusionary by its Members. Spending time in the Scottish Parliament as a participant observer, moreover, supported views ascertained through interviews of debate as inclusive.

Looking first at Westminster, attitudes amongst MPs towards performing in the chamber are structured both in terms of party and sex. Party is the starkest pattern amongst the strongest attitudes – traditionalists and critics – however, and in line with other studies, there are sex differences within the parties (Campbell et al 2010; Cowley and Stuart 2010). A small group of MPs categorised as traditionalists, almost wholly Conservative men, deny the validity of complaints that the dominant style of behaviour in the chamber privileges men and masculinity by arguing that all MPs should adjust. However, the majority of respondents, including both women and men, argue debate can be exclusionary in terms of gender and, or class. Many of these criticisms have been documented elsewhere (Childs 2004; Sones et al 2005), nonetheless it is significant that they are still considered relevant by the same cohort of women more than a decade on, and continue to be perceived by newer MPs as well as by some men. This is the case despite agreement amongst the 1997 new Labour women that overall the parliamentary culture has improved, albeit slowly and insufficiently, and a feeling that their presence has been crucial for this change.

Ritualised forms of behaviour in the chamber are perceived by many interviewees not only as masculine, but also as based on class norms reflecting the Oxbridge Union or public school debating style. The esteemed debating style in the Commons, including, 'the forms of engagement, elocution, public speaking, rhetorical flourishes' was 'honed in the political aristocracy of the 19th Century, later developed in the Oxford Union as part of the training of the political class (Lovenduski 2011b: 11). Data collected through participant observation provides support for claims made by some MPs in interviews that parliamentary debating style privileges a particular type of interaction and style, such as appearing *au fait* with the exaggeratedly polite terms of address and complex conventions for participation (which are not taught but learned through practice), along with apparent confidence in public speaking with humour and without notes. Observing one MP at Westminster indicated that the complex procedures in the chamber add an extra level of anxiety to participating in what, can be experienced, as a hostile environment. This MP, a Minister, was told she would be fielding questions in a topical debate that afternoon. In addition to preparing for the debate, she frantically told her researcher to find out the format of the debate. This researcher told me that she thought the MP was particularly nervous about participating that day, spontaneously commenting 'she just hates not feeling prepared, especially when they're shouting'.²⁵⁷

Feelings of exclusion, most strongly experienced as newcomers, and a view that masculine behaviour is that which is expected and rewarded in Parliament is, moreover, apparent from several interviews. This demonstrates how ritualised forms of behaviour can be alienating – some MPs consciously, and reluctantly, participate in ritualised forms of behaviour because they perceive participation in the chamber according to the established conventions as necessary for efficacy, while others claim to reject it altogether, with potential implications for effectiveness. Furthermore, there is the question of whether MPs who participate in ritualised forms of behaviour, but deviate from the culturally dominant group, are received in

²⁵⁷ The details of this fieldnote observation are not provided for anonymity.

the same way as those who do not (Puwar 2004). Put simply, women MPs may not be able to enact masculine forms of behaviour as successfully as men, not least because of the sexist behaviour alleged to occur in the chamber (Lovenduski 2005). Although party is the most obvious pattern amongst critics (they are entirely Labour and Liberal Democrats), there are some sex differences: gender is a factor for all but one of the women who are critical of behaviour in the chamber, whereas more men than women articulate their sense of belonging to Parliament primarily in terms of class, educational or professional background.

Not all MPs who perceive masculine (and class) norms in ritualised forms of behaviour in the chamber claim to feel excluded from them. Some of those categorised as minimisers are prepared to enact dominant forms of behaviour and may be said to demonstrate, with varying degrees of consciousness, greater willingness to adjust to prevailing norms of behaviour (Bloch 2005). In terms of gendered norms, women in this group acknowledge ways in which Parliament is a man's game and are prepared to play it because they perceive it necessary for being taken seriously. Even though the ease evident amongst some of these MPs suggests they successfully enact the established style, it once more points to the tension of 'managing femininity' (Puwar 2004). It suggests that conforming or deviating from the esteemed debating style may have implications for political efficacy and indicates there are different strategies available for acting in a masculine environment which is likely determined by factors such as party and parliamentary position. The views of MPs with experience in government suggest this provides greater opportunities, and perhaps confidence, in participating in debate. Alternatively, it points to MPs who have successfully learnt the rules of the game and have been promoted within it (Goffman 1967).

To argue that behaviour in the chamber contains gender norms is not of course to assume that men necessarily enjoy and are good at debate, while women dislike it and are considered inferior. To argue so is not only crudely essentialist, it is also not supported by the interview or participant observation data. With few exceptions, the vast majority of women MPs interviewed regard themselves as capable; indeed

many appear to enjoy performing in the chamber. However, the data does indicate that ostensibly gender-neutral institutional norms are perceived to contain masculine (and class) norms. The dismissal of this claim by a minority of interviewees, all Tory and mostly men, puts the onus onto women to adjust to their standards of what makes a good performance (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995). Similarly to the unwillingness amongst some MPs to countenance reform of the parliamentary hours to make them more family friendly, the intolerance demonstrated by (the same) MPs towards colleagues who, they perceive, do not conform to the dominant style of debate is indicative of more general unwillingness to make Parliament more hospitable to historically under-represented groups (Puwar 2004). At an extreme, intimidating or bullying behaviour is justified on the grounds that the targets, read women, ought to be 'better'.

Attitudes towards ritualised forms of behaviour in the chamber, particularly amongst those MPs who offer a gendered critique of the dominant style of debate and claim to experience it as exclusionary, nonetheless point to the gradual feminisation of some masculine institutional norms (Lovenduski 2005). No stories emerge from these interviews equivalent to the notorious 'cupping gesture' anecdotes reported elsewhere (Sones et al 2005). Furthermore, there is a sense among many of the interviewees who were initially daunted by the chamber that they have become more confident with time and experience. Some talk about establishing their own style of performing and others about overcoming potential difficulties such as not being heard. While this may be interpreted as conformity to the (masculine) ritualised forms of debate, none of the women interviewed indicate that they perceive themselves as having conformed to dominant norms by taking on masculine characteristics. This may in part reflect the weakness of self-reported claims in exploring attitudes towards parliamentary debate.²⁵⁸ However, it may also indicate that the masculine nature of ritualised forms of behaviour has somewhat shifted in response to greater numbers of women enacting them. If this is the case – though the data collected here is inadequate to substantiate it – it provides support

²⁵⁸ As discussed in Chapter 2, elite interviews capture perceptions of and claims about behaviour rather than behaviour itself.

for the argument that if institutional norms are gendered in the first place, they can also be regendered (Beckwith 2005).²⁵⁹

It looks as though crude sexism in the chamber is generally considered to be unacceptable but that debate continues to privilege masculinity in more subtle ways, for instance in the ‘tub thumping’ qualities needed for adversarial debate and through gendered reactions to women in the chamber that are implicitly, but not explicitly, sexist. Data collected through participant observation supports this argument. For instance, in a casual conversation, one of the MPs I shadowed expressed the view that women are not as good in the chamber – ‘women aren’t good at rabble rousing. We just don’t have the voice for it even if we try’.²⁶⁰ Her opinion, all the more notable because she was the MP who was least explicitly feminist or gender conscious of those shadowed, is revealing of the perception that the qualities that are valued in Westminster debate are masculine.

Similarly to Westminster, ritualised forms of behaviour have emerged, and are emerging in the chamber of the Scottish Parliament. Adversarial rituals of party posturing, political rhetoric and ritualistic heckling characterise many high profile occasions in the chamber of the Scottish Parliament. This can be said to reflect the social arrangements between MSPs, which like Westminster, are predominantly along party lines and partisan engagement (Gluckman 1962). Political rituals of adversarial politics therefore point to the institutional power structures which are based on political parties, and more specifically, the elites within them (Lukes 1977). The ‘new politics’ ideal of consensuality therefore does not look to play out in the chamber as hoped (Brown 2000) – despite conscious and explicit rejection of Westminster norms, many have been inherited nonetheless (Mitchell 2010). Behaviour in the chamber is therefore an example of both ‘forgetting the new’ commitment to consensual politics and ‘remembering the old’ adversarial politics, based on a party political culture (Mackay 2010).

²⁵⁹ The data is insufficient because the issue was not consistently discussed in interviews and although I watched many parliamentary debates while shadowing MPs, I did not do so over a systematic or long enough period to substantiate the argument.

²⁶⁰ Fieldnotes, Westminster, 05/06/09

The founding ideal of consensual behaviour in the chamber was part of the more general aspiration to make the Scottish Parliament a more inclusive Parliament than Westminster, where the zero-sum and cut and thrust politics were perceived to be particularly alienating to women (Brown 2000). Its failure to manifest itself as intended might therefore be viewed as a broader failure to create a more inclusive Parliament for marginalised groups. However, interview and participant observation data do not indicate this is necessarily the case. Instead, the findings suggest that ritualistic adversarialism, perceived as exclusionary in Westminster, does not have the same effects for Members of the Scottish Parliament in terms of gender or class. Though there are some exceptions, feelings of exclusion are not on the scale reported in Westminster. Moreover, there were no equivalent incidents to those discussed in relation to Westminster – of feelings of anxiety before a debate – during the great deal of time spent on shadowing placements at the Scottish Parliament. This suggests that, although behaviour may look similar in both Parliaments, their Members experience them differently. Though aggressive, and therefore more associated with masculinity according to socially constructed gender roles (Connell 1987), ritualistic behaviour in the Scottish Parliament is not observed or reported observed as exclusionary by a majority of its Members, including many women and those MSPs identified as active on women's issues.

That debate in the Scottish Parliament looks to be more inclusive of its Members than Westminster, despite being described and observed as similar indicates that the origins of political rituals matter; returning us to Steven Lukes' questions about whose rituals are they and who established them (Lukes 1977: 68-9). Parliamentary debate in the Scottish Parliament may be perceived by MSPs to be more inclusive of marginalised groups in terms of gender and class at a practical level, because of more accessible procedures that are easier for newcomers to learn, for instance, the informal terms of address or the greater acceptance of reading from notes. More crucially though, the procedural rules reflect the broad plurality of Members involved in the construction of the institution. In Westminster, where rituals have developed over the long course of its institutional history their rationale may be

unknown (Bloch 2005). There are different (and competing) narratives as to why they exist – the rituals are perceived by a significant group of MPs to reflect the historical dominance of upper-class white men. The Scottish Parliament rituals are known or at least traceable. Indeed, a majority of the contemporary representatives were, and continue to be, involved in their construction. MSPs, who on the basis of the Westminster findings we might expect to feel alienated from ritualised adversarialism, seem to feel at ease with these rituals. Women were involved in the development of ritualised norms of behaviour in the chamber and hence may feel a sense of ownership over them.

Chapter Conclusion

Conceptualising of performing in the chamber as a ritualised, and gendered, practice looks to be a useful way of understanding everyday aspects of parliamentary culture and ways in which this impacts upon the inclusion of women. Ritualised adversarialism, based on theatrical antagonism (though not to imply necessarily insincere) and posturing along party political lines, characterises behaviour on high profile occasions in both Parliaments. Ritualised forms of behaviour speak also to the ‘cultural assumptions’ of Westminster and the Scottish Parliament in terms of gender and class (Deurst-Lahti 2002: 385). Westminster debate, perceived as exclusionary by a significant proportion of MPs interviewed, looks to privilege a particular conception of masculinity which is not exclusively, but perhaps more readily, performed by men (Lovenduski 2005). Behaviour observed while shadowing MPs at Westminster supports claims made by a majority of interviewees that ritualised forms of debate can be exclusionary. Comparable ritualistic adversarialism in the Scottish Parliament reflects its party political culture and is despite the founding aspiration of new consensual politics, which was intended to be, amongst other things, more inclusive for women (Brown 2000). Behaviour in the chamber of the Scottish Parliament therefore looks to be more similar to Westminster than intended (Mitchell 2010). However, this again suggests there are important ways in which political rituals of the Scottish Parliament chamber are different – while rituals are perceived as masculine by many at Westminster, with some exceptions this is

not the case in the Scottish Parliament. In this way, behaviour in the Scottish chamber looks to be more inclusive of women.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The importance of institutional factors in mediating representatives' behaviour is frequently raised by feminist scholars seeking to explain, what Debra Dodson refers to as the, 'probabilistic rather than deterministic' relationship between the descriptive and substantive representation of women (Dodson 2006: 2006). In trying to understand why some representatives seek to 'act for' women and why some attempts are successful, while others are not, feminist scholars have called for attention to the environment in which they operate (Lovenduski 2005). Gendered institutional norms are thought to impact upon the substantive representation of women by shaping the identities, objectives and strategies of representatives (Franceschet 2011; Reingold 1996). Political institutions, 'constrain the expression and articulation of the SRW and other marginalised groups whilst presenting the interests of the status quo as common sense' (Mackay 2008: 130). The political and gendered environment in which representatives operate provides, then, both opportunities and limitations for critical actors – those individuals who are inclined to and in a position to 'act for' women (Childs and Krook 2006).

Although the importance of institutional context for understanding how the substantive representation of women occurs is frequently mentioned in the literature, not many empirical studies have fully addressed the parliamentary environment in which representatives operate, particularly its informal aspects (for exceptions, see Puwar 2004; Childs 2004; Dodson 2006). This PhD has sought to fill this gap by examining parliamentary culture at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament and considering how this impacts upon feelings of belonging experienced by representatives. It develops a distinctive analytical approach by employing concepts, from multiple disciplines, on ceremony, ritual and parliamentary buildings. As was argued at the outset, these concepts lend well to ethnographic research methods, provide an alternative focus to traditional studies of Parliament, and offer greater understanding of institutional power structures.

This chapter has four objectives. First, it discusses the findings from each empirical chapter by returning to the thesis' research objectives and hypotheses, outlined in Chapter 2. Second, it assesses the usefulness of employing the literature on political space, ceremony and ritual for feminist approaches to institutions. Third, it considers how the findings speak to the literature on the substantive representation of women. Finally, it considers the limitations of the approach and raises future questions.

First We Shape Our Buildings, Then Our Buildings Shape Us?

- Research Objective: To examine representatives' perceptions and experiences of parliamentary buildings and the spaces within them.
- Hypothesis: Political space should be examined because it is a physical embodiment of gendered norms. It contains cultural assumptions, which affect sense of belonging, and appropriate behaviour amongst representatives.

Chapter 3 aimed to explore the physical manifestation of gendered norms. By examining MP and MSP perceptions and experiences of their parliamentary buildings and the spaces within them and reflecting upon the physical environment based on participant observation, it sought to understand, first, what political space reveals about parliamentary culture, and second, whether it is amongst the processes through which norms of appropriate behaviour are communicated to representatives. Assessing the usefulness of political space as an analytical lens for feminist institutionalist approaches, it finds support for the hypothesis insofar as buildings, and the spaces within them, are or are perceived to be the physical embodiment of gendered norms that differentially impact upon feelings of belonging amongst representatives. It finds less clear-cut evidence for the subsequent claim that cultural assumptions contained in the buildings affect appropriate behaviour amongst representatives – the final part of the hypothesis, and necessary next stage in establishing a relationship with how the substantive representation of women occurs.

Representatives' attitudes towards political spaces differ between the two case-studies. Where MSPs broadly agree in their view of the Scottish Parliament building, attitudes amongst MPs towards Westminster's parliamentary estate are contested and divide primarily along party lines. It is clear from categorising MPs into groups that the majority of traditionalists – those who express strong affection for the older parts of the parliamentary estate – are mostly Conservatives; though some Labour MPs also approve of the older, more traditional, buildings. Minimisers – those MPs who are ambivalent about the buildings – are made up of MPs from all parties. Only Labour and Liberal Democrats are critical of the older, and more traditional, areas of the parliamentary estate. Differences according to whether the MP was identified as active on women's issues or part of the matched sample are not obvious – almost even numbers of identified and matched MPs are found in each category.

The interview findings provide support for the argument that social norms are manifest in informal and cultural aspects of Westminster and Holyrood, and that these impact differentially upon feelings of belonging experienced by representatives. They, moreover, provide support for the claim that Westminster privileges its historically dominant groups – the physical appearance of Parliament looks to be amongst the mediating factors that communicate to MPs 'who belongs' to Parliament (Parkinson 2009). However, there is no clear evidence to support the subsequent claim in the hypothesis – that buildings impact upon perceptions of appropriate behaviour. Indeed, the Scottish Parliament provides evidence to the contrary – despite the broad approval of the parliamentary building evident amongst MSPs, there is widespread scepticism that they impact positively (or negatively) upon the behaviour of representatives. This is most clearly evident from the failure of the semi-circular chamber, heralded as representative of a more consensual practice of politics, to encourage this type of behaviour (Brown 2000).

Reflections based on participant observation suggest that the physical environment may have intangible and subtle effects on behaviour. For example, spending time at Westminster indicated that parliamentary buildings are part of the process through

which institutional history and hierarchy are communicated to participants (an MP's researcher, in a vignette provided in Chapter 3, comments that, 'the grandiosity gives you a sense something happened here'). And observing the Scottish Parliament gave the impression that the layout of parliamentary offices along an open corridor looks to have implications for everyday relations between representatives and others, in encouraging casual interaction between people on the same corridor. However, there is no way to substantiate these observations.

Nonetheless, and while an attempt to establish a causal relationship between buildings and behaviour looks to be flawed (Parkinson 2009), attitudes towards this particular aspect of Parliament amongst MPs and MSPs shed further light on the 'daily enactment of institutions and the 'doing' of gender' (Mackay 2008: 126). The older, and celebrated, parts of the parliamentary estate are yet another way in which some representatives (categorised as critics in this thesis) are reminded of their marginalisation from Westminster (Puwar 2004). Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that political buildings are amongst the mechanisms used by party whips to ensure cohesion within political parties. Used to assert to newcomers 'who is boss', and to reward loyalists and punish troublemakers, the control over the allocation of, widely varying, offices is a critical stamp of authority for party whips (Rush and Giddings 2011). Indeed, in the context of reform to the appointment of select committee chairs and Members, which transfers control away from party whips, the ability to allocate offices is amongst their last tangible powers (Wright 2010). Using political buildings as an analytical lens therefore provides insights beyond mere 'cultural sideshow' by tapping into fundamental, and elusive, structures of parliamentary power (Crewe 2005).

In the case of the Scottish Parliament, the buildings are taken as one of the symbols of the 'failure' of 'new politics' to materialise (Mitchell 2010; Winetrobe 2001; Shepherd et al 2001). Even so, they are part of the story of the Parliament, at least the one formulated by its founders, and they continue to constitute part of the narrative used by MSPs to articulate the founding aspirations of inclusion and participation (Edwards 2004). For the vast majority of its Members, the Scottish

Parliament's purpose-built building represents institutional values of participation and openness. This is perhaps unsurprising amongst those MSPs elected 1999 – many of whom were involved in the campaign for devolution and articulated its founding aspirations and so might be expected to feel a strong sense of ownership over its physical outcome. More surprising perhaps is almost unanimous appreciation of the building amongst MSPs from all parties. An exception is Conservative interviewees who are more critical of the Scottish Parliament building, particularly when contrasted with Westminster Palace. This might be explained by their original opposition to the construction of the building and down to a conservative distaste for modern buildings; however the sample, of only four Conservatives, is too small to draw strong conclusions. On the basis of interviews, and contrary to the Westminster data, there are therefore no obvious differences marking attitudes to parliamentary buildings and no evidence to suggest the norms privilege some groups above others in terms of gender (or class) – analysis that is supported by spending time in Holyrood as an observer.

In this way, a focus on political space provides insight into a parliamentary culture that is experienced as inclusive by its Members. In particular, Scottish institutional norms embodied in the building can be thought of as inclusive for historically under-represented groups. The atmosphere of the Scottish Parliament, described as 'relaxed' by one MSP, is difficult to quantify. However, the physical environment of the Scottish Parliament *feels* inclusive to representatives and is *perceived* as being more welcoming than Westminster to visitors, and indeed myself as a participant observer. This tells us something about the founding aspirations of accessibility, inclusion and equality, and demonstrates that these continue to constitute part of the dominant narrative articulated by MSPs and others over ten years after devolution. Many of the factors raised in Westminster by MPs who are critical are not an issue for MSPs – the building is more functional, the facilities better, and more importantly for these research questions, the buildings are not perceived as embodying socially exclusive norms. This may reflect the more pluralist construction of the Scottish Parliament and the greater presence of traditionally marginalised groups, such as women.

Ceremonial Sideshow?

- Research Objective: To examine representatives' perceptions and experiences of parliamentary ceremony.
- Hypothesis: Parliamentary ceremonies are worthy of our attention because they convey messages to MPs and MSPs about 'who belongs' and what constitutes appropriate behaviour. They are gendered, shaping representative claims and impacting upon how the substantive representation occurs.

Although usually ignored in studies of Parliament, this thesis follows Emma Crewe's ethnographic study, which demonstrates ceremony is integral to the fabric of the House of Lords (Crewe 2005), and Steven Lukes' insights that ceremonies are not neutral, but instead reflect and perpetuate institutional power structures (Lukes 1977). Interested in how 'cultural assumptions' contained in political ceremony impact upon feelings of belonging amongst representatives (Duerst-Lahti 2002: 385), Chapter 4 'Ceremonial Sideshow?' sought to explore perceptions and experiences of ceremony in two very different case-studies. Westminster, an institution distinctively characterised by an inordinate amount of pomp and circumstance, is compared with the conscious rejection of such splendour in the Scottish Parliament. It drew deliberately on a broad definition of ceremony when conducting participant observation and in semi-structured interviews with MPs and MSPs – using the term in conjunction with traditions and pomp – so as to explore what representatives themselves perceive as the most important ceremonial aspects of the parliamentary culture.

The interview findings indicate that attitudes to parliamentary ceremony, and similar to attitudes towards political buildings, are much more contested at Westminster than the Scottish Parliament. Where there is broad agreement amongst MSPs that Westminster style ceremony is absent from the Scottish Parliament and a shared

view that this is a 'good thing', interviews with MPs demonstrate sharp differences. Based on the hypothesis and sampling method used, we might have expected those differences to be between those MPs identified as active on women's issues and those matched representatives who lack such a public reputation/focus; however they fall most obviously along party political lines. MPs categorised as traditionalists, who strongly defend parliamentary ceremony, are mostly Conservative. Minimisers, so-called because they seek to minimise the importance of ceremony and, or are not aware of social norms, are comprised of MPs from all parties. Critics, whose dislike of parliamentary ceremony looks to be based on its association with social exclusivity, are constituted only by Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs.

Sex differences are not obvious – men and women MPs constitute relatively even numbers of each category, as do MPs identified as active on women's issues and the matched sample of those not specifically known for this. However, in discussions of parliamentary ceremony generally, sitting hours emerge as a particularly important issue for the inclusion of women; this is what many MPs, predominantly women, wanted to talk about when asked about their view of parliamentary ceremony. That the sitting hours appear to 'trump' in many discussions of ceremony is an unexpected, and important, finding because it indicates that many MPs, particularly those who are identified as active on women's issues, are less concerned about parliamentary ceremony as traditions and more about the practicalities of the House. Regarded as a 'habit' rather than a sensible way of working, the sitting hours are conflated with ceremony by MPs from all parties (including both critics and some minimisers). On this particular issue, sex differences are evident and a gendered critique apparent. More women than men MPs are critical of the parliamentary hours on the grounds of their family (un)friendly nature.

Participant observation data suggests that parliamentary ceremonies are an integral part of Commons life – that although not necessarily important in and of themselves, they have to be negotiated on a daily basis by all representatives. Moreover, perceptions at Westminster capture how feelings of belonging vary according to affiliation with the dominant norms and provide support for the hypothesis that that

political ceremony contains cultural assumptions, primarily in terms of gender and class, but also race, age and professional background, that reflect the interests of the dominant groups (Lukes 1977; March and Olsen 1989; Thelen 1999). These privilege those groups who feel most comfortable with the norms that are visible from the ceremony by reinforcing their sense of entitlement (and possibly their sense of efficacy) to the environment; whilst reminding those who feel at odds with the cultural assumptions of their marginalised status (Deurst-Lahti 2002; Puwar 2004). In this way, the findings support the hypothesis insofar as parliamentary ceremony at Westminster contains gendered (and class) norms that are amongst the mediating processes conveying 'who belongs'. Political ceremony is one way that insiders are marked apart from parliamentary outsiders (Puwar 2004).

On a practical level, parliamentary hours are particularly significant for some representative's experiences of Parliament. For many MPs, the sitting hours are tied up with their exasperation with, what they perceive as, other ceremonial aspects of the parliamentary culture. They point to the importance of vested interests within political parties who, it is thought, are unwilling to reduce their power with shorter hours. They also indicate that wrestling over sitting hours is related to the relationship between Parliament and the Executive. The seemingly benign issue of parliamentary reform here taps into fundamental issues of power. The political nature of the legislative process, including the sitting hours, makes any change to it inherently political and subject to fierce contestation. Parliamentary reform, 'as with everything to do with Parliament and government, is essentially political. Much of what happens has to be viewed through the prism of the political battle, the exercise of the mandate and pursuit and retention of power' (Brazier et al 2005: 31).

While the intrinsically political nature of parliamentary reform has been addressed in mainstream accounts, its gendered aspects have not (Kelso 2009; Power 2007; Wright 2003; Brazier et al 2005). Focussing attention on the relationship between the Executive and Parliament, insufficient consideration, or weight is given to other dynamics at play in attitudes towards reform. The findings here demonstrate that reform to the sitting hours is gendered both in terms of the sex differences amongst

the MPs interviewed on the issue – more women than men MPs are critical – and the nature of their criticism. The family unfriendly nature of the hours presents challenges for those MPs with caring responsibilities (mostly women) and there is a belief that the hours reflect the preferences of the time when being a (male) MP was an afternoon job. Many MPs who are critical of the hours – primarily, but by no means only, Labour women – believe that opposition to changing the hours is about keeping alive the ‘clubby’ atmosphere of Parliament. The views of those MPs – mostly Tory men – who defend longer sitting hours do not contradict this perception, and indeed, a small number demonstrate intolerance for changing the parliamentary hours to accommodate MPs with caring responsibilities. Parliamentary sitting hours, which are frequently conflated with ceremony by interviewees, are therefore a particularly good example of the way in which ostensibly gender-neutral aspects of parliamentary culture privilege dominant groups crucial in the creation and maintenance of its ways of working (Lukes 1977). They are also an example of resistance to change amongst old-timers (Crewe 2005).

Comparison with the Scottish Parliament demonstrates that attitudes towards the absence of Westminster style ceremony are much more homogenous amongst MSPs. This is indicative of consensus amongst MSPs towards cultural aspects of the institution more generally. Once again, the importance of ceremony itself – its absence or otherwise – should not be overstated, at least according to participants. That the absence of ceremony is rather ‘superficial’ according to the MSP who wishes to emphasise that the Scottish Parliament is not so different from Westminster, particularly in terms of its adversarial partisan culture, accords with my own observations of the importance of political party while shadowing MSPs and the academic literature (Mitchell 2010; Mackay 2010). However, the overall consistency of views towards this aspect of Parliament, which feed into a shared narrative about the parliamentary culture more generally, suggest informal and cultural aspects of the Scottish Parliament do not contain the same assumptions in terms of gender, class or race as Westminster. This observation is one that is strongly supported by having spent a great deal of time shadowing representatives in both Parliaments. Its inclusiveness reflects the broad plurality of groups involved in the campaign for, and

construction of, the Scottish Parliament (Mackay 2006). So although the presence or absence of ceremony is in some ways unimportant, it is nonetheless indicative of a parliamentary culture that is more inclusive, in terms of gender and class (though not necessarily race or age) backgrounds than Westminster.

Ritualised to Conform?

- Research Aim: To examine representatives' perceptions and experiences of ritualised forms of behaviour in the debating chamber.
- Hypothesis: Ritualised behaviour is a useful analytical concept to explain parliamentary debating style. Ritualised behaviour institutionalises Members to the dominant institutional norms. These are gendered and may impact upon representative claims and, in turn, the substantive representation of women.

Chapter 5, 'Ritualised to Conform?', aimed to evaluate the extent to which behaviour in the debating chambers of Westminster and the Scottish Parliament is ritualised, according to the definition of structured, rule-governed and symbolic behaviour, and a gendered practice. It sought to examine what the rituals tell us about relations at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament and whether cultural assumptions contained in ritualised forms of behaviour privilege some groups above others. The Chapter found support for the hypothesis that ritualised behaviour institutionalises some representatives to dominant institutional norms. Debating in the chamber looks to be ritualised according to similar norms of behaviour in both Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. In both cases, these reflect the norm of a highly partisan political party culture (Mitchell 2010; Mackay 2010; Keating and Cairney 2009; McMillan 2009). Nonetheless, these ritualised practices appear to contain different gender, and class, norms and to impact differently upon feelings of belonging experienced by their representatives.

The findings from both case-studies provide support for the argument that behaviour in the chamber can be understood as ritualised according to institutional norms of behaviour. Moreover, interviews with MPs and MSPs demonstrate, in some respects, similar understandings of the nature of parliamentary debate. However, once again, there are important differences in terms of the feelings of inclusion expressed amongst MPs and MSPs. Similarly to views of parliamentary buildings and ceremony, the Westminster interview data indicates that attitudes amongst MPs are contested, differing in their views of how inclusive debate is and whether this is problematic. Attitudes at the Scottish Parliament are once again broadly in agreement. The vast majority are sceptical that the founding aspiration of new politics plays out in the chamber, instead emphasising the adversarial nature of party political relations. Nonetheless, debate is not described as containing the same gender or class norms as Westminster and is not described as exclusionary.

For the Westminster findings, party and gender intersect in a more complex way than in the previous chapters – not dissimilarly, traditionalists are mostly Conservatives and critics are only Labour and Liberal Democrats. However, differences are clear within the categories. Traditionalists – those who recognise masculine assumptions in debate but defend it nonetheless and are critical of their colleagues they perceive not to conform – are composed entirely of the matched sample of MPs (and are men), except one. Minimisers – those MPs who seek to minimise the importance of the gendered nature of debate or do not address it – are made up of more MPs identified as active on women's issues than those not. This suggests that although masculine, not all MPs – even those identified as active on women's issues – perceive this to be a problem. Critics – the largest group of respondents, who argue parliamentary debate is in some way exclusionary – are made up of more matched MPs than those identified as active on women's issues. This is despite the implicit assumption of the hypothesis and sampling method that, to the contrary, masculine norms of debate are likely to be experienced negatively by a greater number of MPs identified as active on women's issues than those not. There are differences in the grounds on which critics feel excluded – matched MPs are more likely than identified to point to the class assumptions in debate and

although equally likely to perceive masculine norms in debate, identified MPs are more likely to feel personally affected by them.

These findings provide new evidence to support previous studies in showing Westminster parliamentary debate can be exclusionary to women and others who do not fit the masculine ideal type (Lovenduski 2005; Sones et al 2005; Childs 2004; Puwar 2004; Shaw 2002). On the basis of these interviews, explicitly sexist behaviour in the chamber looks to be less frequent than it once was. However, Cameron's recent 'calm down, dear' and 'I know that the honourable Lady is extremely frustrated' lines suggest that overt sexism is not extinct. Moreover, the style of debate continues to be perceived as implicitly privileging men and masculinity – analysis that is supported by spending time with MPs, watching one anxiously prepare for debate and hearing the view of another that women are not good at 'rabble rousing' – a perceived quality for good oratory. Incorporating the views of their male colleagues shows that it is not just women who find debate exclusionary – men also make these claims (though in this sample, they are also more likely to deny the validity of complaints). The substance of the criticism made suggests that masculine norms are off-putting to some men, as well as some women, and point to the importance of class norms, as well as gender norms, for mediating feelings of belonging experienced by representatives.

The greater number of MPs identified as active on women's issues who downplay the importance of masculine norms in debate shows that not all experience these negatively and, or are willing to be critical on these grounds. Their views nonetheless point to the tension of 'managing femininity' in a masculine environment (Puwar 2004), where the pressure for female bodies to prove themselves as 'suitable' is greater than for male bodies (Childs 2008). Support for such an argument is provided from a different direction by the traditionalists who are intolerant, indeed critical, of MPs who do not, in their eyes, conform to ritualised forms of debate. This is despite their explicit acknowledgment debate contains socially exclusive assumptions and demonstrates an expectation that to be taken seriously, at least by this small group

of interviewees, in the chamber it is necessary to adjust to ritualised forms of debate according to the dominant norms (Lukes 1977).

The findings from the Scottish Parliament again suggest that ritualised forms of adversarialism, similar to Westminster, have developed. This is despite the well-articulated hope for a more consensual style of politics that would be more inclusive of women parliamentarians (Brown 2000). Such observations suggest that the 'rules in form' may sit in tension with the 'rules in use' (Mackay 2010) and provides further evidence of the failure of this particular commitment to new politics to transpire. Despite this, debate looks to be experienced as less exclusionary in the Scottish Parliament than Westminster. Although described as adversarial by a majority of interviewees, it is not described as masculine or exclusionary as might be expected on the basis of the Westminster findings. This provides further support for the argument that institutional norms, and rituals of behaviour, are more inclusive when their formation is based on broad participation. The involvement of women MSPs, and inclusion of feminist demands as part of the mainstream discourse from the outset of the Scottish Parliament, looks to have created an informal political culture that is inclusive of women representatives, at least according to MSPs themselves and supported by my own observations.

Comparison between the two case-studies suggests there are institutionally specific ways of behaving in accordance with the dominant norms (March and Olsen 1989) and provides support for the argument that how these are learned can be understood through the concept of ritualised behaviour. Behaviour in the chamber can be understood as being learned from others through observation and imitation (Goffman 1967). Authoritative figures, those who look like they know what they are doing, are likely to be especially influential in establishing and reinforcing norms (Bloch 2005). The interview data, corroborated by observation, furthermore provides support for the argument that ritualised forms of debate are gendered – ostensibly gender neutral norms in Westminster debate are perceived by a majority of MPs interviewed to contain masculine and, or class assumptions, which impact

negatively upon the inclusion of representatives who do not identify with or fit the politician norm (Childs 2008; Lovenduski 2005; Puwar 2004).

The importance of avoiding an essentialist approach (that might, for example, presume women do not enjoy cut-thrust debate) is highlighted both by the Westminster findings – where a significant number of men also feel excluded from the dominant style on the grounds of both the macho and Oxbridge style of debate – and the Scottish findings – where debate is described as adversarial but is not experienced as masculine, even by representatives identified as active on women's issues and are highly gender conscious. This points to the importance of the power dynamics in the origin and development of ritualised forms of behaviour (Lukes 1977). It indicates that rituals of behaviour that are inclusive in their formation are inclusive in their enactment. The Scottish case shows that characteristics associated with masculinity, like, for instance, adversarialism, are not inherently masculine. This indicates Westminster norms of debate can be regendered – masculine norms can be regendered neutral or feminine (Beckwith 2005). The Westminster interview data provides some evidence, though limited, that change to the practice of ritualised forms of behaviour has occurred. MPs who provide a gendered critique generally do so in the past tense and most do not claim to feeling personally disadvantaged in the chamber having learned strategies and developed confidence for participating. This suggests that the presence of women parliamentarians is crucial for the feminisation of institutional norms, however intangible and incremental a process this may be (Lovenduski 2005).

Inclusion and Substantive Representation

The distinctive concepts, methods, and comparative approach used in this thesis offer greater understanding of the way in which institutions are gendered and new insight into how gendered norms impact upon the inclusiveness of Parliament. They indicate that gendered and classed norms differentially affect sense of belonging experienced by representatives. This may, moreover, impact upon how the substantive representation of women occurs by facilitating or obstructing

‘favourable policy outcomes’ (Franceschet 2011: 60). It provides a way to operationalize feminist institutionalist approaches, by offering new avenues and conceptual insights, for understanding the institutionalisation of gendered norms. Political space, ceremony and ritual provide a way to explore the informal aspects of institutions, commonly dismissed in political science as ‘cultural sideshow’ (Crewe 2005), but identified by feminist scholars as critical to comprehending the environment in which representatives operate. Informal norms are crucial for understanding the everyday lived experiences of representatives (Mackay 2008). Informal norms are particularly important to understand in contexts where they sit in tension with the formal ideals, structures or rules (Mackay 2010; Kenny 2011).

Using political space, ceremony, and ritualised behaviour as analytical lenses provides insights above and beyond existing studies of Parliament. Each of the concepts offers insight into how ‘cultural assumptions’ in terms of gender and class, along with race, age and professional background, permeate institutions (Duerst-Lahti 2002: 385). All provide a lens for engaging with how this affects representatives’ sense of belonging to the informal parliamentary culture and enable understanding of how inclusive the culture is. The concepts offer a way to explore the intangible, and difficult to measure, ways in which institutions impact upon the everyday experiences of representatives. So although there is consensus in the academic literature that the Scottish Parliament is more similar to the Westminster than championed at its inception (Mitchell 2010, Winetrobe 2001; Shepherd et al 2001), the approach in this PhD captures the subtle ways in which this particular institution feels different and is experienced as more inclusive by its representatives.

An important advantage for feminist institutionalists concerned with inclusion is the ability of these concepts to capture the importance of other identities in mediating the belonging of representatives in both Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. Although the intersection of dynamic, temporal and contextual identities is frequently acknowledged in feminist research (for example, Porter 1998), the privileging of gender as an analytical category can, at least on the surface, sideline the importance of other identities (Acker 2006; Puwar 2004). Attitudes towards both

ceremonial and banal aspects of Parliament examined here demonstrate how feelings of belonging are affected by the intersection of gender with other identities, most obviously social class in these case-studies. The Westminster findings indicate that perceptions of parliamentary culture are most obviously mediated by gender and class, along with educational and professional background, but also race and age. The Scottish findings suggest the culture here is more inclusive in terms of gender and class, though say less about inclusion in terms of race, age or professional background.

Political Space

More specifically, each of the approaches have specific advantages and limitations. Using political space as an analytical lens provides a novel way to explore gendered norms. It can be criticised on the grounds that although parliamentary buildings and the spaces within them shed light on institutional legacies and dominant values – here through representatives’ interpretations of their meaning/effect and through data collected through participant observation – they may be limited in providing understanding of informal norms or behaviour *in practice* (Parkinson 2009). Where behaviour does not match up to formal ideals, political space may only provide the official account of the institution’s history – that which was very consciously and carefully painted by the designers (Edwards 2004). In these findings moreover, parliamentary buildings look to be less important for belonging than other aspects of institutional culture – at least according to representatives’ self-perceptions. A greater number of MPs are ambivalent about the Westminster’s buildings than about ceremonies or performing in the chamber. And while MSPs are positive (perhaps more than might be expected given the controversy over its construction) about the Scottish Parliament building, the vast majority are dubious they have any demonstrable effect on behaviour.

Nonetheless, using political space as an analytical lens captures social norms that, though difficult to quantify, look to mediate perceptions of the inclusiveness of Parliament. At Westminster, attitudes towards the older, more extravagant, Palace vis-à-vis the modern Portcullis House is indicative of identification with the

parliamentary culture more generally. Beyond that, moreover, using space as an analytical lens is a novel way of exploring gendered institutional norms. Though a gendered critique has been made, both academic and by women MPs themselves, of many aspects of Westminster's parliamentary culture, this has generally not focussed explicitly on its buildings (Childs 2004; Sones et al 2005). That buildings have not been the subject of reform or debate at Westminster furthermore means they are a less controversial issue than ceremonies or behaviour in the chamber and so less likely to provoke a ready-made narrative during interviews with MPs. Rather than ascertaining positions MPs have already taken up in relation to whether ceremony should be reformed or whether debate is macho, focussing on buildings captures more subtle ways in which the latter relate to the culture.

Moreover, negotiation over physical space is something this concept captures that ceremony and ritualised behaviour do not – a focus on parliamentary buildings taps in, perhaps unexpectedly, on fundamental struggles of power. The prerogative to allocate space at Westminster, where offices look to be a form of currency, are perceived to be a crucial tool for party whips, and in turn a dynamic in the maintenance of the party political culture. Though this power is perhaps not what it once was due to the greater availability of offices in Portcullis House, it is a power likely to be jealously guarded now that whips no longer control select committee appointments (Rush and Giddings 2011). This point did not come out in interviews with MSPs and may be less applicable to the Scottish Parliament where space is more standardised – offices can therefore be used less as a reward or bargaining tool.

Finally, it is possible, though problematic to substantiate, that buildings have a greater impact on representatives' behaviour than they themselves perceive. As mentioned above, interviews capture claims to behaviour rather than behaviour itself (Norris & Lovenduski 1995).²⁶¹ The effects of the physical environment, like institutional norms generally, are likely to be so subtle and intangible that representatives themselves might not notice. This points to the need for methods,

²⁶¹ The limitations of elite interviews are considered further in Chapter 2.

such as participant observation, that go beyond self-reported claims, to explore the relationship between institutional context and behaviour. Indeed, insights generated from participant observation in this thesis point to the significance of the physical environment in both cases, as discussed above, by affecting inclusion and everyday relations between representatives and others.

Parliamentary Ceremony

Employing insights from literature on parliamentary ceremony indicates that seemingly banal, even decorative, aspects of Parliament can be indicative of institutional power structures (Lukes 1977). The importance of ceremony in and of itself should not be overstated, because although revealing of formal values, these may be at odds with informal norms of behaviour (Kenny 2011; Chappell 2011; Mackay 2010). In terms of these case-studies, exaggerating the significance of the absence of ceremony at the Scottish Parliament obscures important similarities between these two institutions, particularly in terms of the party political culture in both, according to the extant research, interviewees, and my own observations (Mitchell 2010; Winetrobe 2001). Moreover, a narrow conception of ceremony, that which focuses only on the official and special aspects of Parliament, will not capture other dynamics of institutional power and norms. Employing ceremony as an investigative lens provides insight into the ceremonial aspects of the institution representatives themselves experience as important for their sense of belonging. In this case, other factors such as the sitting hours, perceived by many MPs in Westminster as part of parliamentary ceremony and tradition (and many used these terms interchangeably), are identified as the most important issue for how they experience parliamentary life as practically difficult. That many representatives conflate obviously ceremonial events (e.g. prayers) with other traditions, such as the hours, indicates they view them as contributing to the general parliamentary culture. The emphasis of many of these interviewees, especially if not only women, on the sitting hours suggests that, although they are critical of the general culture and the ceremonies they associate with it, the practical issue of sitting hours is more important for inclusiveness of Westminster.

These caveats aside, employing ceremony as an analytical lens has much in common with, and enhances, historical and feminist approaches to institutions. Attitudes towards parliamentary ceremony provide insight into institutional norms and the ways in which these are gendered (and classed/racialised). The concept provides a way of understanding how representatives perceive the institution and, because of the social assumptions perceived within parliamentary ceremonies, gets particularly at feelings of belonging and exclusion. A focus on ceremony at Westminster exposes starkly opposing attitudes amongst MPs – institutional values made visible to representatives look to reinforce sense of ease amongst some representatives, while reminding others of their historical marginalisation. This is strikingly contrasted with homogeneity in attitudes towards cultural aspects of the parliamentary culture evident at the Scottish Parliament. The apparently contested nature of ceremony at Westminster, but not at the Scottish Parliament, takes us to the heart of Steven Lukes' questions about institutional power and shows the importance of cultural aspects of the institution for feelings of belonging (Lukes 1977). It suggests that the association of Westminster's parliamentary ceremonies with a historically dominant elite provokes feelings of discomfort and aversion amongst some MPs, but is unremarkable for others. In contrast, identification with the culture at Holyrood amongst a broader consensus of Members looks to reflect the broader participation in its construction.

Ritualised Behaviour

Insights from literature on ritualised behaviour provide understanding of how performing in parliamentary debate is ritually organised according to a normative order – people learn how to act in a particular context by picking up on hints of appropriate behaviour from more authoritative figures (Goffman 1967: 43). The findings point to some limitations of employing the concept of ritualised behaviour for understanding parliamentary debate at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. Understandings of ritual that slip into treating participants as unthinking and oblivious are not supported by this data – indeed, it is difficult to think of any research method that would provide decisive evidence for such contentions. Moreover, concepts of ritualised behaviour, taken from multiple disciplines, vary in

their usefulness. Those which are inherently religious or associated with something magical are limited in their applicability to Parliament (Zuesse 1987; Abeles 1988).

More specifically, most conceptions of ritual are better placed to explain behaviour in Westminster than the Scottish Parliament. The emphasis on tradition and deeply entrenched norms in many conceptions (Bloch 2005; Crewe 2005; Geertz 1973; Gluckman 1962) means their insights are less obviously relevant to new institutions. For Maurice Bloch (2005) for instance, people may not understand the origins of ritualised forms of behaviour, however they develop a narrative around which they perform them (a good example of this at Westminster is the notion espoused in several interviews that the terms of address in debate encourage polite behaviour). However, these insights are less useful for understanding behaviour in the Scottish Parliament where rituals have been created more recently. The origins of behaviour (for example, formal rules of debate or, more informally, the 'desk-banging' style of heckling), are known, or are at least traceable. More importantly in terms of belonging, or a feeling of ownership, a number of the interviewed MSPs were involved in the construction and re-enactment of particular types of behaviour.

Nonetheless, conceptualising of performing in the chamber as a ritualised and gendered practice provides a useful way of understanding how institutional power dynamics impact upon feelings of inclusion experienced by representatives. Ritualised forms of behaviour at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament provide insight into social relations (Gluckman 1962; Bell 2005) – ritualised adversarialism in debate, evident from the partisan exchanges and heckling observed, and described by interviewees in both case-studies, reflects the dominance of the party political culture. Perceptions amongst representatives of these dominant forms of behaviour are revealing of the inclusiveness of these Parliaments in terms of both gender and class. Whereas in Westminster ritualised behaviour looks to be exclusionary – some bodies are regarded as performing it better than others – the rituals developing at the Scottish Parliament look to be more embracing of different bodies. This is evident from the widespread derision of behaviour in Westminster debate as macho. Behaviour that looks, and is reported, as similar in Holyrood debate is not

experienced as exclusionary on such a scale. This offers fresh insights on the emergence of ritualised behaviour in new institutions to the literature on political rituals. That the input of women and other marginalised groups in the development of parliamentary norms has created a more inclusive culture at Holyrood indicates that inclusive rituals are an outcome of plural processes in their development.

The Substantive Representation of Women

Building on recent feminist approaches to institutions (Krook and Mackay 2011; Waylen 2011; Franceschet 2011), this thesis has examined the inclusiveness of the parliamentary culture at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. It has drawn on literature, from within and beyond political science, on political space, ceremony and ritual, and examines how these speak to the 'cultural assumptions' of Westminster and the Scottish Parliament (Duerst-Lahti 2002: 385). It contends that attitudes towards these seemingly banal aspects of Parliament are able to explore representatives' feelings of belonging to parliamentary culture; part of the everyday way in which they experience Parliament and with possible implications for how the substantive representation of women occurs (Mackay 2008). Insights from the myriad of literature on political space, ceremony and ritualised behaviour therefore complement feminist institutionalist approaches. They offer alternative strands for exploring how institutions are gendered – particularly their informal and cultural aspects – and new understanding of the inclusiveness of Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. Three broad insights into how the findings speak to the literature on the substantive representation of women can be made.

First, the findings provide further evidence that institutions contain gendered norms. By examining political space, ceremony and behaviour in the chamber, it is apparent that institutions contain 'cultural assumptions', in terms of gender and class, that reflect their historical legacies (Duerst-Lahti 2002: 385). The findings are in line with historical institutionalist approaches that argue institutional norms are not neutral, but look to privilege some groups above others (March and Olsen 1989; Thelen 1999). Moreover, they provide support for feminist approaches to institutions that

ostensibly gender-neutral institutional power structures, norms and modes of behaviour are gendered. The Westminster data offers new evidence that institutional norms contain masculine assumptions that look to privilege men and masculinity (Lovenduski 2005). This is evident, for example, from the frequent reference to the Palace as similar in appearance to an exclusive gentlemen's club, a view of ceremonies as more befitting for the 19th Century, and widespread perception, and observation, of parliamentary debate as macho. Norms of behaviour, which contain idealised notions of masculinity and femininity, differ for men and for women (Acker 1992). In an environment descriptively and culturally dominated by men, women stand opposed to the somatic norm and must carefully 'manage' their femininity (Puwar 2004). The approach used in this thesis demonstrates how gender intersects with class and other identities, amongst which race, age and professional background emerge as particularly important, in mediating feelings of inclusion to parliamentary culture.

Second, the findings demonstrate that informal aspects of institutions matter for experiences of inclusiveness (Franceschet 2011). Although the focus of political space, ceremony and behaviour in the chamber more obviously addresses formal aspects of the institution, even its ideals, each of the concepts tap into how these diverge from, and sit in tension with, the formal (Kenny 2011). This is particularly important in the case of the Scottish Parliament where the assumption the Scottish Parliament was a clean slate – an opportunity to create a more accessible and less confrontational political culture – ignored that it was, in Fiona Mackay's words, 'nested' within other institutions (Mackay 2010). The 'new politics' agenda is widely discredited, not least in 'politics as usual' norms of executive dominance and political party culture, and responsible for creating unlikely expectations (Mackay 2010; Mitchell 2010; Winetrobe 2001). However, in looking at ceremonial and seemingly banal aspects of the institutional culture, this thesis provides a slightly more optimistic assessment that informal aspects of the Scottish Parliament, difficult to measure, are more inclusive in terms of gender and class, at least according to representatives themselves and my own observations. Although not necessarily

crucial to political outcomes, this does look to affect how representatives experience the institution on an everyday level (Mackay 2008: 126).

Third, the findings indicate that context matters for feelings of belonging experienced by representatives. A comparative approach suggests that the Scottish Parliament is more inclusive of women. This is evident from contrasting perceptions amongst representatives within and between the case-studies – where parliamentary culture is a much more contested topic at Westminster than Holyrood – and is supported by my own observations. Although there are crucial similarities between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament – most importantly in the party political culture that operates in both – there are differences in how the cultures are experienced by their representatives. Norms of behaviour, such as ritualised adversarialism in the chamber, that might on the basis of the Westminster data be assumed to be exclusionary, do not look to be experienced as such at the Scottish Parliament. This suggests that the origin of institutional norms and behaviour are crucial to understanding their impact and indicates that pluralistic construction of norms creates a more inclusive culture (Lukes 1977). On this argument, the greater inclusiveness of Scottish Parliament for women can be partly explained by their high descriptive representation from the outset, and the integration of feminist demands in the construction of the parliamentary culture.

These findings build upon the literature on women's political representation in electoral politics; and despite its 'theoretically bothersome and empirically contingent' nature (Mackay 2008: 125), the continued interest in the relationship between women's political presence (descriptive representation) and representation of women's interests and issues (substantive representation). As discussed in Chapter 1, empirical studies investigating the impact of women's presence on parliamentary processes and outcomes have demonstrated the precarious relationship between descriptive and substantive representation of women – while there is, 'a great deal of circumstantial evidence' (Lovenduski 2005), an increase in the numbers of women does not translate readily nor necessarily to the transformation of policy outcomes (Childs 2004; Childs and Krook 2006; Dodson

2006; Mackay 2006), even as many studies show a positive relationship under certain circumstances. The importance of the political and gendered environment in which representatives operate is commonly identified as crucial to understanding how the substantive representation of women occurs (Lovenduski 2005; Celis et al 2008). For example, in parliamentary systems such as Westminster, the importance of the Executive in driving policy can limit opportunities for individuals (Annesley 2010).

The findings of this thesis point to the importance of the presence of women for creating a more inclusive culture, however the data collected here is less revealing of whether an inclusive culture does, in reality, provide greater opportunities for the substantive representation of women. The inability to establish such a relationship reflects the limitations of the approach used in this thesis and points to broader challenges for feminist institutionalists interested in questions of how, where, when and by whom the substantive representation of women occurs. Although the research objectives aimed at exploring the link between gendered norms and representative claims, the data collected through elite interviews and participant observation does not enable robust analysis of how context impacts upon behaviour. So while the methods used explore the apparent inclusiveness of parliament – how norms are gendered and how this impacts upon representatives' perceptions of belonging – they are unable to provide evidence that this always and necessarily impacts upon how the substantive representation of women occurs. This limitation may reflect the methods and instruments used, but it also reflects a challenge for feminist approaches to institutions more generally. For although the link between institutional factors and the substantive representation of women is frequently made theoretically; it is much more difficult to demonstrate empirically.

Future Questions

Elections at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament mean both have experienced dramatic change since the bulk of the fieldwork for this research was carried out. The 2010 general election dramatically ended the Labour Party's 13 years of

government and replaced it with a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government. There was a small increase in the number of women MPs – from 19 to 22 per cent. The largest increase was seen in the Conservative Party whose low starting point of 17 was raised to the (still modest) total of 49 women MPs – 16 per cent of their MPs. These results raise further questions about the issues explored in this thesis. For instance, how are gendered forms of ritualised behaviour in the chamber experienced by newcomers? Does this impact upon their belonging? Is the younger, and more diverse, new cohort of Conservative women more likely to perceive, and critique, gender and class norms in parliamentary ceremony and buildings, notwithstanding their partisan identities? Will the parliamentary culture become more inclusive of women because of their small descriptive increase, or less, because of the increase of Conservative MPs who are more traditional about the aspects of parliamentary culture explored in this thesis?

Equally, if not more, dramatic were the results of the 2011 Scottish Parliament elections, which against political pundit predictions, and an electoral system deliberately intended to avoid such a scenario, produced a large majority for the SNP. The number of women remained steady, perhaps by luck rather than design, at 34 per cent (Kenny and Mackay 2011). Once again, these results raise questions about perceptions of parliamentary culture. For example, will the majority afforded to the SNP result in the further adoption of Westminster norms or will it ease the tension between the parties generated by the tight numbers under minority government? How will ritualised forms of behaviour develop to match this shift? Will the increase of new SNP members, who did not participate in the founding of the Scottish Parliament or the subsequent development of ritualised forms of behaviour, experience the culture as inclusionary as the interviewees here? Will they develop parliamentary ceremonies, perhaps based on their own take of Scottish nationalism?

The findings here point to two distinctive directions for new research. They suggest that institutional design matters less than the informal norms that emerge out of it (Franceschet 2011; Kenny and Mackay 2011). As Fiona Mackay points out, the ‘rules in form’ are not necessarily congruous with the ‘rules in use’ (Mackay 2010). Power

looks to remain firmly with the Executive and political parties at both Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. This points to the importance of research that looks at the gendered cultures within the core executive (Annseley and Gains 2010) as well as within political parties (Childs 2004; Evans 2011; Childs and Webb 2011). Indeed, spending time shadowing MPs and MSPs for this research flagged up marked differences in the culture within the different political parties, suggesting there are different opportunities and constraints to how representatives 'act for' women.²⁶²

They also point to the need for more studies that link process with outcome, which in practice means looking at how the political context relates to particular policy outcomes (Franceschet 2011). One way of doing so might be to employ the process tracing methods recommended by Celis et al (2008). They propose a conceptual framework that broadens the scope of enquiry to include multiple actors – beyond the most obvious women parliamentarians, multiple spaces – inside and outside the legislative arena, raises questions around why substantive representation of women is attempted at particular times and places and looks at how it is expressed. Combined with the analytical approaches used in this thesis – which are able to explore the gendered nature of the context in which representatives operate, this holistic model has the potential to better capture the processes and outcomes of how the substantive representation of women occurs.

²⁶² Fieldnotes, Westminster and the Scottish Parliament, several occasions.

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Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview schedule: MPs

Representation

- What do you understand by the idea of representation?
 - How do you go about it? what do you do as a representative?
 - how is your time spent? In the House, Committees, constituency.
- What do you think are the qualities of a good MP?
 - Who do you think is a good MP?

Representation: Parliament activities

- What are the main influences on your behaviour? attitudes? you in Parliament?
 - party, whips, committee membership, colleagues, friendships, relations with groups, acting on behalf of constituents.
 - How do these affect, if they do, how you go about your job?

Parliament culture/practices

- Are there any particular parliamentary ways of doing things/ traditions you like/approve of/enjoy? Any you don't? Why?
 - Do you think that parliamentary 'norms of politics' or 'the way things are done' (probe: yah boo politics, hours, practices, old-fashioned terms of address or extravagant dress).
 - affect MPs' sense of belonging to parliament?
 - affect MPs' inclination or sense of entitlement to act on certain issues?
- Why does parliament have ceremonies/traditions?
- What would you change? Have tried change?
- What do you think is a good performance in the H of C?
 - In the Chamber?
 - At PQs, who is good?
- Is Commons fair environment?
 - inclusive?
 - Treat people equally?

- Sexist?
- Women judged differently on performance?

Buildings

- What does it feel like to be in parliament? Like/dislike?
 - different parts - Chamber, WH, PCH
- Did it feel like an unfamiliar or even intimidating environment when you first arrived?
 - If so, are you now used to it?
- Do you ever bring groups, constituents, other visitors into parliament?
 - Where do you bring them? Why? Probes:
 - Where do you feel most comfortable meeting them?
 - Does that feel formal/informal?

SRW

- It is often claimed that women represent women, agree?
- Do you feel you represent women?
 - How do you represent women? (Probe symbolic, substantive)
 - Does this involve particular activities within the House? Constituency? Media?
 - Probe: e.g. APG membership.
- Who do you work with in the House on these issues? Why? Probe: importance of networks: party, APGs, friendships, etc.
 - Who do you not work with? Why?
 - Have your male colleagues been receptive to your campaigning?
- Do you think women impt for symbolic reasons? Impt for changing perceptions of party?

Groups

- Do you have relationships with women's groups?
 - What's the nature of the rship. Probe: direction?

- If so, why do you think women's groups contact you? (probe: does your gender matter?)
- How do you act on these? Probes: what kind of work have you done with them?
- are there any differences between women's groups operating at a national and local level?
- Which groups would you recommend I interview?

Finishing up

- What are you most proud of?

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview schedule: MSPs.

Representation

- Constituency/regional member: Who do you feel you represent?
 - How do you go about it? what do you do as a representative?
 - how is your time spent? In Parliament, Committees, constituency.
- What do you think are the qualities of a good MSP? (
 - Who do you think is a good MSP?

Representation: Parliament activities

- What are the main influences on your behaviour? attitudes? you in Parliament?
 - party, whips, committee membership, colleagues, friendships, relations with groups, acting on behalf of constituents.
 - How do these affect, if they do, how you go about your job?

Parliament culture/practices

- You've been MSP since X, can you tell me a bit about the principles of the Scottish Parliament?
 - What do you think is the definitive difference b/ Westminster & Scottish Parliament? Which prefer? Why?
 - Probes: Rejection of Westminster; transparency; style; inclusion; ceremony, dress, formalities, terms of address.
- Why do you think the Scottish Parliament didn't adopt Westminster ceremony and traditions?
 - Less deferential? Why? Class? Anti-English?
 - Any rituals specific to the Scottish Parliament? Why?
 - Do you think parliamentary norms encourage more consensual style of working? Between parties?
 - Do they provide greater opportunities for backbenchers/legislators campaigning on particular issues?

- Do norms encourage participation of third sector organisations? How? Belonging?
- Have things changed much since you've been here?
 - What would you change? What might change?
- Performing in the Chamber: what makes good performance?
 - At FMQs: who is good?
 - Do you enjoy it?
 - Fair environment? Inclusive? Yah-boo?

Buildings

- Do you like the Parliament Building? Why?
- Did it feel like an unfamiliar when you first arrived?
- Do you ever bring groups, constituents into parliament?
 - Where do you bring them? Why?
 - Do they seem to like it? Feel comfortable?
 - Does that feel formal/informal?
- What do you think the designers were trying to achieve?
- Did they succeed? Probes: in encouraging participation, sense of belonging, inclusion? Do public feel it's 'their building'?

SRW

- It is often claimed that women represent women, agree?
 - More active on women's issues? Distinct perspective?
- Do you feel you represent women?
 - How? (Probe symbolic, substantive)
 - Does this involve activities in Committees, Cross-Party Groups, Legislation, media, constituency?
- Who do you work with in the House on these issues? Why? Probe: importance of networks: party, APGs, friendships, etc.
 - Have your male colleagues been receptive to your campaigning? [If applicable]
 - Are friendships important? Networks in party?

- Culture: Do you think parliament women friendly? Probe: hours, style.
- Symbolic: Do you think women impt for symbolic reasons? Impt for perceptions of parliament?

Groups

- Do you have relationships with any particular groups?
- women's groups?
 - What's the nature of the rship. Probe: direction?
 - If so, why do you think women's groups contact you?
 - How do you act on these? Probes: what kind of work have you done with them?
 - Where do you meet?
 - Importance of committees for participation?
 - Which groups would you recommend I interview?

Winding down: most proud of?

